


# PEOPLE AND BOOKS

FROM THE WRITINGS OF  
W. ROBERTSON NICOLL

"Nearly everyone thinks that to make  
a good anthology is an easy task. It  
is one of the most difficult."

W. R. N.

 HODDER AND STOUGHTON  
LIMITED LONDON

*Made and Printed in Great Britain.*  
*Hazell, Watson & Viney, Ltd., London and Aylesbury.*

TO

MAUD WYATT-SMITH





*On W. Robertson Nicoll.*

He was, perhaps, the only man in the world who thought that more people should write books; he considered that the best next thing to a good book was a bad book. He was so fond of books that I am sure he never saw a lonely one without wanting to pat it, and give it sixpence. I should say that he read thousands of them every year of his life, and as quickly as you or I may gather blackberries.

Seldom, I suppose, has there been an editor who was his paper so peculiarly as he was. He made "*The British Weekly*" "off his own bat," . . . made it by himself out of himself; it was so full of his personality that he came stalking out of all the pages, meeting every reader face to face, so that it can truly be said he paid a visit every week to every person who took in the paper. Myriads of people must have grown up under his guidance, and learned many of the lessons of life from him, and, next to those who worked for him, they are the ones who will miss him most. But we, his contributors, who helped him to however slight an extent, will miss him most of all, remembering his thousand kindnesses, his glorious enthusiasms, and the passion of his soul.

J. M. BARRIE.



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I. “*W. R. N.*” *CONVERSES*

*Personally, I am not skilled in conversation, but pride myself on a certain knack in asking questions. In this way much has come to me, and many things that were not asked for. You might not care for them, but I take pleasure in thinking that John Leech, when he died, left behind him forty pairs of trousers and forty-six pots of cayenne pepper. I like to know that Professor Cowell bought one boot at a time, and that an elastic-sided boot.*



## CONFIDENCES

*White World, Warm Fire, and "Ivanhoe."*

LETTERS are good reading if they are written straight away as fast as the pen can be driven ; that is, if they are frank talk. And when postage was dear and pence were few, letters had their golden age. I saw lately a correspondence between two northern lads carried on nearly fifty years ago. Both were in remote places, both were full of hope and fear, both were entering the enchanted world of literature, and the more magical land of love. The ink was brown, the blue paper faded, and the letters had been read to tatters amid the northern snows. Yet the best printing was not so attractive as these descriptions of the white world, the warm fire, and "To-day I began *Ivanhoe*. I have little doubt I shall like it better even than its predecessors." And the young ambition "I wonder whether our names will yet be known beyond these little parishes." And "I do not know what progress you are making in the affairs of the heart. When last in A. I met Miss V——" and then follows a minute account of how she looked, and spoke, and held her head. No, there cannot be letters like these nowadays.

*On Colds.*

NOWADAYS people with colds, even those whose colds have passed into pleurisy, pneumonia, and consumption, are told that the cure is in fresh air, that they should be out in the open as much as possible. So much is this idea being pressed, that institutions are built for the treatment, and I should not be surprised if at last we are told that it is best to live night and day in the open air. This would mean the abolition of dwelling-houses, and of rent, and of mankind.

*A Secret.*

A VERY wise woman told me once that where wives were obviously supreme in the household they had gained their supremacy by complete devotion to their husbands.

*Learning to Read.*

I REMEMBER during a severe illness being allowed to read in bed. There I made certain great discoveries. First I found in an old volume of *Tait's Magazine*, in a paper by Thomas De Quincey, certain lines of Allan Cunningham's which thrilled me with a new and strange gladness. This was my first experience in the appreciation of poetry, my first realised consciousness that there was such a thing in the world as poetry. The lines as I remember them were :

"Gane were but the winter cauld,  
And gane were but the snaw,  
I could sleep in the wild woods  
Where primroses blaw.

"Cauld's the snaw at my heid,  
And cauld, cauld at my feet ;  
And the finger of death's at my een  
Closin' them to sleep.

"Let nane tell my father  
Or my mither sae dear ;  
I'll meet them baith in heaven  
At the spring-time o' th' year."

About the same time I met with Tennyson's lines :

"I have heard  
Time flowing in the middle of the night,  
And all things floating to a day of doom,"

and recognised that I, too, had heard the rushing of time break the silence of midnight, and that thus far I could understand the poet.

*Sifting my Books.*

WHEN I sift my books, as I am compelled to do now and again, it is books of travel with which I am most ready to dispense. I have read many books of travel first and last, and only a very few have impressed me as really good and memorable books to be kept at all hazards. The first that ever impressed me I do not possess, and I am not sure that I can give the exact title. It was, I think, called *A Journey to Lataku*, by the Rev. John Campbell. Mr. Campbell was a missionary in South Africa, and I believe he published more than one book, but this is the one I

know. We had it in our Sunday-school library, and it gave me quite new ideas of the world. Next to it came Mungo Park's travels, published in a pamphlet by W. and R. Chambers. These were less interesting, but very interesting. After these there was *Eothen*, a book incomparably superior in every way, a book which it was a delight to read for every reason. *Eothen* stands out to me as the supreme book of travels and a literary masterpiece. Next to it I should put Herman Melville's *Typee*, and *Omoo*. These were published in green paper boards by Bohn, and I imagine there is a good deal of romance in them, but they filled my imagination. Drummond's *Tropical Africa* is perfect in its way—adequate, but without one wasted word. These are all the books of travel I can remember having really cared for.

*Home again.*

WHEN you return to fields and roads almost every yard of which is familiar and identified with memories, the river of thought is full, and for the most part very quiet and happy. I am inclined to think also that there is something in being fitted into a particular landscape. I know just how the hills look from each window and from each corner of the little garden. In the early years I was fitted into these, and I still look upon mountains as friends, rather than in any more distant aspect or relationship.

*A Man with Weak Eyes.*

I KNEW an ardent and voracious reader whose eyes became weak. He was allowed to read two hours a day, and he told me that he was no worse off than in days when he could go on for eight hours. The limitation made him select his reading.

*Books Bought and Given.*

THE only books I have really cared for are the books I have bought even at considerable sacrifice, and the books that have been given me by friends. Even for a poor man in a dying nation, it is quite easy to buy books.

*Of Ruin and Salvation.*

I HAVE an extreme interest in reading stories of individuals or of nations who pass through the experience of ruin and come out on the other side.

## CATS

*With Books around.*

WHAT memories come back to me of long solitary evenings in the stormy north, with a bright fire, and my black cat, Lucifer, sitting opposite me winking and purring loudly and cheerfully—verily a most beguiling and persuasive optimist.

*But very nearly.*

SAMUEL came to us as a kitten from a village in Surrey. He is only half a Persian, but in my opinion half-Persians are the best of cats. They are often magnificently coloured—Samuel's rich black and yellow cannot be surpassed—and they have the inestimable advantage of being healthy and robust. He is a large cat, but there are larger, though I have never seen one more beautiful. I quite admit that his intellect is not remarkable. He is not, so to speak, an eminent cat.

*Unworthy Romans.*

WHAT are the reasons that make the companionship of the cat so comforting? First, I should put their truly Oriental character and their

love of Nirvana. I have read that the Romans could never tame cats, which was no doubt one of the reasons for their decline and fall.

*One-tenth Awake.*

PHILOSOPHERS have puzzled a great deal as to what Nirvana means, but, if they were to watch Samuel for an hour, they would understand the delicious state in which it is possible to be nine-tenths asleep, and to use the remaining tenth of one's self in realising the pleasure of rest.

*Their Moral Uplift.*

IN my opinion the great charm of cats has never been properly noticed. It is their purring. What can be more restful than to listen to the loud purring of a cat? What can be more instructive? There you see pessimistic theories rebuked. Here is one creature in the world heartily and thoroughly content. You know that there are hundreds of thousands like him, and begin to suspect, if you are in the dumps, that you are disquieting yourself in vain, or at least, that things will go better yet.

*Literary Sagacity*

A MAN may be a very good man, and even a good literary man, and know nothing about journalism. Sorrowfully, but firmly, I must point out

that Mr. Birrell is guilty of a greater fault than that. He actually speaks about Keats being ridiculed in *The Edinburgh Review*. I thought everybody knew the lines :

"Who killed John Keats?  
'I,' said the Quarterly,  
Savage and tartarly,  
'I killed John Keats.'"

Those who do not know them are more ignorant even than the brutes that perish. For I am sure my Persian cat knows them, and knows also that *Jane Eyre* was not hawked about from publisher to publisher. Yet they are not known to Mr. Birrell, or Mr. Traill, or Mr. Moberley Bell, or whatever other geniuses direct the fortunes of Literature.

*Their Critical Estimate of Poetry.*

IT is a fact that, on reading certain minor poets to Samuel, I have found the intelligent creature show distinct signs of amusement. More than this, I tried him lately with some of our Laureate's laborious trash about the union between England and America. After hearing two stanzas he deliberately left the room.



## I HEARD : I KNEW

*Charles Murray.*

I HAD the great pleasure of welcoming in London Mr. Charles Murray, the renowned author of *Hamewith* and the most distinguished of living Scottish poets. Mr. Murray looks very fit, as lean as a greyhound, with a bright clear complexion. He likes South Africa and believes in the future of the Dominion, but his heart is still in Scotland.

*Thomas Hardy.*

IN general company he is very silent. You may hear half a dozen journalists discussing style in his company, and he, very nearly the first stylist left to us, will sit quiet and attentive, as if he wished to get some hints.

*Two Sayings.*

THE other day we heard in conversation two sayings, one from an eminent publisher, the other from a brilliant journalist. Said the publisher : "No publishing house can outlast three generations." Said the journalist : "Journalism is a profession for youth ! A man in journalism is dead at forty."

*Ingratitude.*

I HAVE known a man hand over the careful savings of careful years to save a friend in difficulty without receiving at the time, or at any time, even so much as the most formal expression of thanks.

*Cotter Morison.*

AGAIN and again I have met friends of the late James Cotter Morison, and they agree that none of his writings give the faintest impression of his real and extraordinary powers. They account for this by saying that his circumstances were too easy. He had no external pressure. He had unlimited time on his hands, and was excessively fastidious in style.

*Woodrow Wilson.*

WHEN I saw and heard Mr. Wilson in London he struck me at once as a schoolmaster, or rather perhaps a professor, with the same desire to talk instructively, and carry lucidity as far as it can be carried.

*First Meeting with Augustine B—*

MY first meeting with Mr. Birrell is very memorable to me. It was at a little literary club meeting in a tavern in Fleet Street. The room was wretchedly draughty. The fare, which was supposed to be that of the eighteenth century, was so very heavy

that those who ploughed their way through it, thought mournfully of the morrow. In addition there was a heavy fog, which got into the little room to such an extent that everyone seemed to be gloomy if not hopeless. But Mr. Birrell was there, and his spirits rose against the circumstances. I do not know how many speeches he made or how many jokes he cracked, but by the end of the evening he, through the sheer radiance of his personality, had altered the aspect of everything. What made the assembly shine ? Robin was there.

*A Stranger in the Train.*

WHEN thoroughly wakened up I began to observe my companion. He was busily engaged with Bishop Ellicott's *Commentary on the Ephesians*. After ten minutes or so he shut it, and took out of his pocket a yellow book, called, if I am not wrong, *Mr. Potter of Texas*. This he perused with frequent grins and chuckles for ten minutes more, and then back to Bishop Ellicott. And so on, devouring them in alternate mouthfuls. This extraordinary and perplexing course made me anxious to know who he was, and I soon discovered from his luggage. He was the Head Master of one of the greatest of English public schools !

*Coventry Patmore.*

IT was my great felicity to see the poet. He was just starting for a drive with—how shall I say it ? the third “Angel” smiling by his side. I gazed on

him with keen interest, and found in his face exactly what I had expected. For I knew that there had always been something of the unregenerate in Coventry Patmore. Even when he distilled the sweetness of the "Angel in the House," he was a scarifying critic. He had something of the Bohemianism of his father, P. G. Patmore. Even now, when he is a Roman Catholic, a Conservative, a contributor to the *St. James's Gazette*, and, generally speaking, a pillar of the State ; he can kick.

*A Literary Dinner.*

NO one was half so interesting to me as Mrs. Mark Twain, to whom her husband has paid so fine a tribute. It was not difficult to see the secret of his attachment in that bright, vivid, eager, changing face with its look of undying youth. There is something in the best type of American face which is never reproduced in this country, and you have that something to perfection in Mrs. Twain, if I may so call her. All through the evening she made it manifest that she never missed a point ; she never relapsed into stolidity for a single moment, though I am afraid most of us were stolid now and then for a quarter of an hour at the time.

*E. T. Cook.*

COOK himself was one of the most silent men I have ever met. I remember once at a luncheon given in Tavistock Square to Lord Milner, and where

other notable men were present, Cook did not speak a single word the whole afternoon. He smiled benevolently that smile which his friends will not forget, and was manifestly pleased, but had nothing to say. His wife was a brilliant talker.

*The Sorrows of Lowell.*

WE once ventured to say to his great friend, Charles Eliot Norton, that there was a touch of melancholy about most of the things that Lowell wrote. Norton replied that this was not so, that no one had a right to expect to escape the sorrows of life, and that, taking it as a whole, Lowell had had his share of happiness, though also his full share of trial.

*Folk I have Met.*

I HAVE among my acquaintances, a precept, a hearth-rug, a barometer, a wet blanket, and a complete set of fire-irons.

*Meredith and Hardy Lunch.*

I HAVE seldom been more interested than in gazing upon Meredith and Hardy as they sat near each other. Mr. Hardy's features gave the impression of "many thought-worn eyes and morrows"; Meredith looked as if he had met and mastered life.

We had the privilege of a speech from Mr. Hardy. He expressed his gratitude to Mr. Meredith for reading his first book, which he described as "very strange

and wild.” Meredith here interrupted with the word “promising.” Mr. Hardy went on to say that if it had not been for the encouragement he then received from Mr. Meredith, he would probably never have adopted the literary career. It was profoundly interesting to see these two men, the most representative in the English literature of their time, conversing together with the picturesque window half covered with green for a background. Afterwards Meredith, in a few rich, strong words, expressed his exalted estimate of Hardy’s work.

*The Worthy Doctor.*

NEVER mind at first what people tell you about your reading ; so long as it is innocent, it will do you good. I knew at one time a very good doctor who was not fond of books, but he was induced to read *Harry Lorrequer*. He greatly enjoyed that excellent work, and he then got *Charles O’Malley*. He went straight on with *Lever*, and although naturally he did not care for the later books as he did for the first, yet he found an interest in tracing the progress of a mind, and he came in time to be quite a civilised person.

*Heinemann and Pawling.*

I USED to think that there were no two pleasanter men in London than William Heinemann and his partner Sidney Pawling. They began work fully equipped for their tasks. Heinemann had been for

a long time with Trübner and learned much. Pawling was with his uncle, Mr. C. E. Mudie, to whose memory he was very loyal. Pawling was fortunate in his wife, who translated very ably Max Nordau on *Regeneration*. The two had the advantage of the friendly assistance of Mr. Edmund Gosse, who not only gave them his own books, but counselled them about others. They had an intense desire to modernise publishing, and they succeeded in doing it to a wonderful extent. It was commonly thought that this was very profitable to them, but I doubt whether there is much money in the translations into English of the great foreign classics. However, Mr. Pawling and Mr. Heinemann were in complete agreement upon this subject, and there was something always fresh and interesting in their publishing lists. The Heinemann experiment in publishing was the most dashing and brilliant that has been attempted in my time.

*Memories of Mark Rutherford.*

I CANNOT deny that he is often very melancholy. I have seen him as sad as a pine-tree.

*The Relief.*

"I BOUGHT an annuity," said a distinguished public man to me the other day. "I have saved for many years, and, now that I have bought it, I know that I have bought sleep."

*Frederick Greenwood.*

YEARS ago, before Japan was much talked of, I was with Greenwood at a hotel in Hastings. After dinner we went into the smoking-room, and Greenwood expounded his views on the inevitable dominance of Russia. I have never heard more eloquent and convincing talk. He argued that Russia must by and by acquire our Indian Empire, and thereby obtain ascendancy in the councils of Europe. Destiny made this inevitable. He suggested possible alternatives and combinations. He took them to pieces one by one. He showed that Russia would be too strong for any of them, and in the not distant future would obtain that for which she was steadily working. The demonstration seemed as cogent and irresistible as if it were taken out of Euclid.



## REFLECTIONS

### *A Sign of Conceit.*

SOMETIMES Swelled Head shows itself in a tendency to over-advise. One of my oldest and shrewdest friends thinks that this is the surest of all symptoms. The victim conveys an underlying suggestion of potentiality in all his assertions—"If I were you I would"—"Had I been consulted." If he had been present at the incubation of the eggs of the common goose these eggs would have yielded cygnets.

### *Quite Different.*

ARE not literary ladies and writing women two classes?

### *The Trend of the Time.*

IT is want of leisure that makes us pessimistic about the prospects of literature. When one has a quiet evening at home, or in a country house, which he can devote wholly to the magazines, he is filled with admiration and hope.

*Is Genius Abroad?*

WHEN so many kind and keen eyes are watching for the slightest sign of literary promise, is it possible that genius is starving? In London all things are possible.

*Hours of Toil.*

I HAVE no doubt at all that the successful journalist works harder than any other man, except the successful physician.

*The Later Days of Henry James.*

I USED to understand Mr. James perfectly, but there is no security now. The person who expects that his explanations will make anything more clear is of a sanguine temper indeed. A huge fog will be generated in which few will find it safe to walk.

*A Sigh and a Doubt.*

WHEN I recall the names of Longfellow, Lowell, Emerson, Hawthorne, Mrs. Beecher Stowe, I feel as if we shall never look upon their like again.

*Human Tape Measures.*

I HAVE known in the flesh several tape measures ; so have you, so have all of us. We are examined almost from the cradle, and the time may come when we shall be periodically examined even to the grave.

*Belinda.*

SHE lectured, and women should never lecture.

*Idle Days.*

LIFE should have a margin, but there are lives which are nearly all margin, from which every living line and letter have passed away.

*"Everyone thinks."*

I HAVE lately been stating to several friends the three following beliefs, which I have arrived at after long observation. Everyone thinks that he or she has a sense of humour. Everyone thinks that he or she is fond of reading. Everyone thinks that he or she possesses great decision of character. On the whole these beliefs are unfounded.

*On Slights.*

I ARGUE that people will forgive anything and everything except the slights which they cannot openly and frankly resent. They will fight and bear no malice. They understand that war is war. They will forgive their wounds, and hardly remember by whom they were inflicted. But slights—especially the slights they suffered from when they were young and helpless—these they never forget, and I doubt

whether they ever really forgive. In *The Antiquary* I find a terrible illustration. The tragedy of Eveline Neville as told by Elspeth—the old woman who had long been as dead to all about her—had its origin in a slight.

*The Child who Reads.*

I SAW it said the other day that the future of any boy passionately fond of reading was assured, and I can well believe it.

*The Old Story.*

THERE is nothing so enthralling as the Romance of a Cold. To write this romance—or to tell it—to go from the root of the matter to the end of it—to trace in all its picturesque and moving detail the origin, progress, and issues of a cold, is one of the highest and noblest employments of the human faculties.

*Not That !*

THERE are few subjects I cannot read about, but when anybody writes about the Thames Conservancy I am done.

*Anger.*

IT is a poor business to read nothing ; it is even poorer business to read under compulsion. One is inclined to say : “ He that is ignorant, let him be ignorant still.”

*A History of English Journalism.*

WE have no book which deserves to be called a history of English journalism, and the field is so wide and difficult that no one is likely to cultivate it.

*Tennyson.*

THE most magnificent line of love poetry ever written is, "To you, who are seventy-seven."

*Mr. Micawber.*

I HAVE always believed that Mr. Micawber did fairly well in Port Middlebay, that he did become a magistrate, and that the cheering with which Mr. Micawber was received defied description. Again and again it rose and fell, like the waves of ocean.

*On Ties of Blood.*

TIES of blood are very strong—far stronger than might be thought. As life unfolds itself it will be seen that relatives cannot easily be shaken off or dispensed with. I have put this with extreme moderation. As a matter of fact, among all relations a certain strength of love and interest may be developed. Take the affection that was between Eugénie de Guérin and her brother. The affection of Eugénie was so deep, so tender, so all-embracing, that literature has perhaps no parallel to the force and fervour with

which she wrote to her brother. She began writing a journal for him. It was kept irregularly, but it is a transcript of her inmost thoughts and feelings and inspirations. When he died she kept on for a little writing to Maurice in heaven.

*What is a Bookman?*

A BRILLIANT writer is accustomed to say that it is no credit to anyone to like good books. A man has no right to be proud that he enjoys reading Boswell, but he has some right to be proud and some right to claim the title of bookman if he can read the *Early Homes of the Prince Consort*.

“E. B. B.”

SOME of the most estimable and gifted people who ever lived have practically died for want of a sense of humour. Of these was Mrs. Browning.

*Robert Buchanan.*

WHO is the most forgotten of our contemporaries? Some of us were talking over the subject lately, and after discussion we agreed in the conclusion that, considering everything, Robert Buchanan was buried deeper than any other who made a figure in his day.

## MUSINGS

*Swinburne.*

FROM Mr. Swinburne's handwriting of twenty years ago I think you could have told that he was a poet and a man of genius.

*Sir George Trevelyan.*

HE has the manly, frank, chivalrous, sensitive face and manner as of old. You feel in listening to him that you are in the presence of a true man anxiously following the gleam.

*Boredom.*

WHAT can you make of this? You sit down before your bedroom fire with *Peveril of the Peak* at five o'clock. At seven o'clock you find that you have read only two pages. How is this to be accounted for? I venture to think that the phenomenon demands the immediate attention of scientific men.

*Beerbohm.*

WE all love Max, even those of us whose sole chance of immortality is derived from his caricatures. As an artist in his own line he has no rival, but his prose is almost equally important.

*Ruskin in 1950.*

I HAVE a lurking doubt as to whether Ruskin was right, as to whether he will last.

*George Eliot's Face.*

I SUPPOSE the reason why people differed so much about George Eliot's looks is that some of them saw her luminous, and others did not.

*The Chapter.*

THERE is perhaps no greater first chapter in any novel than that which introduces *The Return of the Native*.

*A Question and an Answer.*

I

IF in a happier day I am ever appointed examiner for English Literature Honours at a University, I should be content with one question. What really tests knowledge is information about the inconsiderable yet conspicuous people. Thus, if I were examining on the literary history of the early years of the last century I should put but one question, "What do you



know of Lydia White ? ” Whoever could answer satisfactorily would have a full knowledge of the literary history of the period.

## II

WERE I asked to select the most admirable piece of homely description in the English language, I should take this inimitable account of Boswell's night at Slains : “ I had a most elegant room ; but there was a fire in it which blazed ; and the sea, to which my window looked, roared ; and the pillows were made of the feathers of some sea-fowl, which had to me a disagreeable smell ; so that by all these causes I was kept awake a good while. I saw in imagination Lord Errol's father, Lord Kilmarnock, (who was beheaded on Tower Hill in 1746), and I was somewhat dreary. But the thought did not last long, and I fell asleep.”

## FAVOURITES

“*W. M. T.*”

ONE gets more thought, more suggestion, more quickening from a sixth perusal of *The Newcomes* than from reading for the first time the best six works of the present season.

“*Margaret Ogilvy*”

THIS was eminently one of the books which it was easy or impossible to write. The least sign of labour, of self-consciousness, would have destroyed it. It has been so written that no book of the generation is so likely to outlive us all as this.

*Barrie's "Little Minister."*

I HAVE been much abused in public and private, in letters, newspapers, and conversations, for my faith in *The Little Minister*. In point of mere charm there has been nothing like this book since *Lorna Doone*.

*Macaulay.*

THE extraordinary thrill and passion of Macaulay's writing, the soundness and integrity of his nature, and his immense capacities for love and hate

strike me more forcibly than ever. Who is there among us now fit to be named in the same breath with him ?

*Letters of James Smetham.*

SURELY everybody will soon be saying to everybody else : " Have you seen the Smetham Letters ? " Not for a long time has such a profusion of lovely things, bright things, wise things, droll things, devout things, been shaken out before the world. Of course they are too good for the world : there is too divine an aroma arising from them all ; and by " everybody " we mean everybody with a soul ; but souls of all sorts will soon see what they have got in this choice book. " All sorts," we say. Here is Ruskin writing to this rare creature affectionately, admiringly, and in a delightful conversation saying, " I don't know but that art, painting, poetry, are devices of Satan ! " Rossetti comes to see him, and ends with arranging for him to paint in his studio (for Smetham is an artist) every Wednesday, and to stay all night, just to hear him talk ; this went on for seven years.

*Timperley.*

ON the whole, I think I am safest with a book which perhaps very few of your readers will recognise. It is a substantial volume of more than a

thousand pages, double columns, entitled *Timperley's Encyclopædia of Literary and Typographical Anecdote*. It is a work of endless entertainment. There is promise in its fat, pudgy, genial appearance, its stout gilt back.

*Books of Bliss*

THEY came to the house this (Friday) afternoon. I have taken them out, and as I look at the fourteen volumes printed on India paper and most attractively bound in limp green leather, with a pretty bookcase, I need only say with Lord Beaconsfield : “ I am overwhelmed.” I subscribed to the Ninth Edition, and we got one volume at a time with considerable and sometimes very considerable intervals between. While I thoroughly perceive the force of Mr. Chisholm's arguments for a complete edition with all its volumes published practically at one time, it must be admitted that fourteen volumes descending on a sudden are apt to imperil a reviewer's life and reason. Nevertheless, it is with the utmost complacency that I gaze on the volumes. I am provided for. When a man knows that for a long time to come he has a feast before him in the two hours which he may lawfully spare for desultory reading, he is happy, and I am happy now and mean to be for months to come.

*Meredith.*

**R**ICHARD FEVEREL amazes me. How that marvellous love-story, with the shine of the morning on its dewy pages, took no fewer than nineteen years to get into a second edition is almost inexplicable.

*"Don Quixote."*

**Y**OU will find, unless I am much mistaken, that a great book remains a great book at different periods of life. The things that impressed you at twenty are not the things that impressed you at thirty, but yet as the mind grows, and as life discloses its realities, the book has other things to say to you. The boy who reads *Don Quixote* at twelve laughs over it, but at fifty sees he is reading the greatest book in the world.

*Dr. Richard Garnett.*

**H**IS books are numerous, and though none of them fully reflects himself, they are all valuable. Pre-eminent among them is the too little known *Twilight of the Gods*, a work of genius if any such has appeared in our time. His life of Emerson contributed to the "Great Writers" series is a perfect gem, the best brief biography so far as we know in the English language.

“*Chambers’s Journal.*”

IN Launceston lately, after dark, I was reading an old volume of *Chambers’s Journal*, which was part of the hotel furniture. There is nothing better for an idle hour. I prefer it to almost any magazine going.

“*The School for Saints.*”

MRS. CRAIGIE’S book is in the manner of *John Inglesant*; less stately, less full, less equal, but not unworthy of the comparison. Her knowledge of the Bible and her bright applications of it would of themselves make the story attractive. *Mirabilia testimonia Tua!*

*Fane Austen.*

THERE are moods in which the quiet tenderness of *Persuasion* is more pleasing than the rattle of *Northanger Abbey*. They both are books, however, which everybody should know, and there is little likelihood of their place in English fiction being challenged.

*A Forgotten Delight.*

THAT evening I took up De Morgan’s *Budget of Paradoxes*, a book which never fails me, one of those books that you can never open without learning something.

"*Phæbe Junior.*"

**P**HÆBE *Junior* is on the whole the best and most perfect of Mrs. Oliphant's works.

"*Joseph Vance.*"

**T**HE quaint turns of phrase that constantly occur in it, the grasp of mind, the grim humour, the side glances at questions of all sorts, make it almost as suggestive a book for the journalist as the essays of Walter Bagehot, and I am not able to give higher praise.

*Peggy Webling.*

**A**FIRST-RATE novel for the holidays is *A Spirit of Mirth*, by Peggy Webling. I do not remember Miss Webling's previous novel, but I shall look out for the next. There is something in her manner so cordial, so gracious, so hopeful, and so mirthful, that her book will thaw the thickest ice. It is very rare to read such a story—so frank, so radiant, so buoyantly confident in goodness and in its triumph.

*Old American Stories.*

**S***AY and Seal* is perhaps the best and most characteristic of all the series. It is, however, a very long book, and an abridgment of it would totally destroy its charm. But *The Hills of the Shatemuc* I also think one of the best.

"*Rob Roy*."

THERE is hardly any greater achievement in modern fiction than Scott's brief, sure interpretation of the overwhelming and delicious virgin passion that woke in Diana's soul. It is all the more bewitching that it is never represented as the controlling force of life. Duty is plainly above it. Diana Vernon orders her life in obedience to greater claims ; and it is only when they are satisfied that her love has its way. Clear-eyed, self-forgetting, unrepining, and even cheerful, she faces the prospect of a solitary life, and yet in such a fashion that not even a lover can call her cold.

"*The Forerunner*" : By *Merejkowski*.

THE novel is one of the greatest books written in our time, and it is astonishing that so profound, subtle, and powerful an interpretation of one of the immortals should have attracted little attention in England.

"*Queed*."

THE book is essentially sentimental and religious, and when all is said and done, the vast majority of novel readers prefer books of this kind.

*A Set.*

THE editor of the *American Bookman* has been asked to give a list of the ten worst books in the English language. He gives a list of "The worst



ten books in English that we have ever read through, confining ourselves to books whose authors might have been expected to do better." (1) *Philip*, Thackeray ; (2) *Joan of Arc*, Mark Twain ; (3) *Alton Locke*, Kingsley ; (4) *Scottish Chiefs*, Porter ; (5) *Aylwin*, Watts Dunton ; (6) *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot ; (7) *Lothair*, Disraeli ; (8) *Clarissa Harlowe*, Richardson ; (9) *The Blithedale Romance*, Hawthorne ; (10) *Hyperion*, Longfellow. If he had inserted *The Heart of Midlothian*, *Esmond*, and *Villette*, the list would have been fairly satisfactory, but it would have been the list of the ten best books, which was not intended.

"*Dred*."

TO survive in the world of literature means mostly to die and rise again alternately, and in that sense I think the Beecher Stowe books certain to survive.

*John Halsham.*

IT may take as long a time for John Halsham to find his circle as it did Mark Rutherford to find his ; but as Mark Rutherford has found his public, and is steadily widening it, so will the author of *Kitty Fairhall*. To read either author is a liberal education. If there are those amongst my readers who care for no stories that do not rush on at a gallop, containing an adventure in every chapter ; if there are any who have no ear for the music of style, if there are any who

have no heart for the scarcely spoken or unspoken suffering of the world, they had better leave *Kitty Fairhall* alone. If, on the contrary, any desire to read a book that will make them wiser, gentler, more pitiful, more aware of the discords and the harmonies of life, they will turn to this book.

“*Hereward the Wake.*”

WE must frankly say that we often find Kingsley ponderous, melodramatic, and dull. Also there is an undeniable touch of fever about much of his writing. But *Hereward the Wake* is beautiful, quiet, calm, gentle and true. With far less effort than in his other books, he sets before us a vanished life. It is the buried life of the old Vikings.

*Hardy.*

THERE is not a book perhaps so rich in gems of thought and speech as *Far from the Madding Crowd*, though there is an unearthly strangeness of atmosphere about *The Return of the Native*, which probably makes it his most memorable novel.

“*A Cigarette Maker’s Romance.*”

IT is only in one little book—*A Cigarette Maker’s Romance*—that you hear the beating of Mr. Crawford’s heart.

“*The Story of my Heart.*”

JEFFERIES at his best was an exquisite writer. I wish I could be sure that his books at this date had a wide sale, but I seldom come across them, and meet with very few people who seem to know his original and fine genius.

“*Pickwick*” again.

## I

WHO will ever give us again the gaiety, the humour, the movement, the profound and rapid observation, the infinite variety of his first books? On the whole, perhaps the prize must be divided between *Pickwick* and *Chuzzlewit*. In the latter Dickens performed the unprecedented feat of actually flogging a nation. He put America on the block, and inflicted a salutary pain on every member of the body politic. Was there ever a more wonderful feat?

## II

I ADMIT there are books which we do not reread with pleasure because we know them too well. They cannot be many, but there are some. I know *Pickwick* so well that, at the end of a page, without turning, I could almost continue the narrative.

*Arnold Bennett's "Old Wives' Tale."*

## I

THE other evening having a couple of hours to spare, I found this book at the top of a heap, and took it up to read. It kept me happy and busy until two o'clock in the morning. How it is that I should have known so little about Mr. Arnold Bennett's powers as a novelist, I cannot understand. There is no book in the fiction of recent years that I should rank as equal to it. The first part is not the best, and readers are in danger of breaking off after about a hundred pages. If they do so, they will lose a great deal. The story is a masterpiece.

## II

THE merit of the book is that it gives a most unusual impression of genuineness and truth. There is plenty of art in it, but, above everything, it is true—in the sense, not only of correctness, but also of completeness. The effect is produced by many little touches, the collective effect of which is ~~overwhelming~~.

*The Favourite Story.*

ONCE on a time people used to fill up albums of confessions. To one question "Who is your favourite novelist?" I always wrote, with perfect honesty and sincerity, "The Rev. C. B. Greatrex." Probably no gentle reader has ever heard of Mr. Greatrex's name. He wrote a novel which went

through a magazine called *Hogg's Instructor*, and it was continued for volume after volume. The title of the tale is *Memoranda of a Marine Officer*, and that was my favourite story, and, to be perfectly candid, I think it is my favourite story still. But I have introduced it to various persons, eminent and not eminent, and no one ever could see anything in it. Years ago I discovered where the author was living. He was rector of a little parish called Hope, near Ludlow, and I went there, and found him old and bent and feeble. Whoever owes him anything, I owe him much, and hope some day to discharge my debt.

*Page's Letters.*

THE one thing I rather miss in this stately biography is that Page's passionate love for books scarcely appears.

## VISITS

*To William James.*

I HAVE the liveliest and happiest recollection of hours spent in his beautiful library at Cambridge, Mass. No snugger library ever existed. The roof was comparatively low, but length and breadth were ample and nearly equal, and every available space was filled with books, which could be reached from the floor without effort. They were, in a manner, picked books—that is, they served their owner's purposes and they were extraordinarily well thumbed. It seemed as if every one had been used repeatedly. The master was willing to discourse on any or all of them, and there was a singular spell in his address.

*To Robert Neil at Pembroke, Cambridge.*

THE rooms were exquisitely furnished and enriched with the spoils of his travel, with Persian rugs and carpets of high value, and with many precious and richly bound books. The space he had for books was limited, and the result was that his store was more and more carefully sifted each year. I found among them up to the last visit I paid him, the

volume I gave him at our parting in Aberdeen. It was a copy of Andrew Lang's *Ballads and Lyrics of Old France*, the best book, in my humble judgment, Mr. Lang has ever written. He presented me with a copy of *Poems and Romances*, by George Augustus Simcox, always valued by me, and now more valued than ever.

## THE DREAM HISTORY

### *A History of the Victorian Period.*

I MAY be allowed to mention that I have long contemplated an attempt at a history of English literature in the Victorian period, and have made many notes for it. It is not likely that I shall ever get a beginning, but it may interest some readers to know the plan I adopted after long consideration.

(1) In the first place, I am convinced that no one can attempt successfully more than one period of English literature. The Victorian period is more difficult than that which preceded it, but probably it is manageable.

(2) I also became convinced that the book should be published in volumes, for each of which a subject should be allotted.

(3) I planned to begin with English periodical literature in the Victorian era, and I still have a lurking hope that this may not be quite impossible. Even in the literary history of the eighteenth century, limited as it is and carefully as the field has been trodden, no one has used sufficiently the periodical of the time, such as the monthly review and critical review, etc. But the strength of the Victorian mind was largely devoted to periodical literature of a high



class. There were the great quarterlies, the renowned monthlies, the weekly reviews, and the rest. No one can write the literary history of the age satisfactorily who has not a thorough knowledge of the magazines, reviews, and weeklies. They have been used to some extent, for the ideal of a proper literary history has become much clearer than it was to many of our better minds. One is almost staggered to think of the treasures regarded by no man which are to be found in the old volumes of *The Spectator*, *The Saturday Review*, *The Athenæum*, and other periodicals. Yet, so far as I know, the students of the future will not be able to say almost anything about the authorship of the very able articles to be found frequently in the periodicals then current. As for *The Saturday Review*, I believe the keys have been hopelessly lost, but I have been able to trace a great deal that would be useful to the student, and though I know that the book would be regarded merely as a book of reference and thus spoken of contemptuously, I know also that the information contained in it would always be of some value, and indeed of considerable value.

## PERSONAL

*Susan and Anna Warner.*

I WROTE to Miss Warner suggesting that a life of her sister should be written, and the reply to my letter arrived some ten years after. This leisurely mode of communication scarcely promised well for the accomplishment of the task, but it has been done.

*"My Reviewing."*

DR. CONAN DOYLE has been good enough to give to the public this week his conceptions of my work. To his excited imagination I am a person continually writing reviews of the same books. You have me in all continents. The reader never knows where I may turn up. I do about one-fourth of the whole number of criticisms published in this country. I have mysterious allies who do the other three-fourths, and when two or three of us put our heads together, beginners have no chance, and even established reputations are shaken. I devote myself entirely to praising books in which I am supposed to have a pecuniary

interest, and to clearing the field of other books by widespread disparagement. It is not only in Britain I do these nefarious things, but in America. I remember reading in a clever little American paper, now defunct, that I had so imposed myself on the American public that they believed in anybody whom I recommended. Well, I ought to be ashamed to say so ; but I should rather like for some reasons to occupy this place of mysterious power. I should especially covet the capacity for work which would enable a man to do a quarter of the critical work that is published, besides attending to other things. But I am afraid the picture is sadly overdrawn. Criticism is to me the merest aside in a very busy life. It is no pleasure to me to denounce a young writer. I do not remember that I was ever guilty of the crime. I have never worked in connection with any other critic, and have never made the slightest endeavour to bring any individual round to my opinion of a book. In the rare cases where I have written several reviews of a book, the book has been invariably one with which I have had no connection, direct or indirect. Only in the remotest sense have I any pecuniary interest in the success of any book, and not a single sixpence I possess is invested in publishing. Nevertheless, I do reviewing occasionally, and hope to continue in that way. There are pleasures in criticism, though the profits are very small. I have no doubt that Dr. Doyle has received for one novel more than I have ever received for all the criticisms I have ever written. *Non equidem invideo ; miror magis.*

*In Needless Heats.*

LET a man be laid aside, and he often begins to enjoy life for the first time. He is not envious. He is not feverish. He is not deluded. I always keep within reach two books by invalids, *The Complete Works of Artemus Ward* and *A Cruise upon Wheels* by Charles Collins, and read them as the best cure in the world for needless heats. It might be well for me if I read them more.

*“When I have a temperature.”*

WHEN I have a temperature I read *Rob Roy*, and when getting better almost any of the others. *Redgauntlet* is much to be recommended, and I know two people at least who always take it with them to the Continent. But there is much to say for *Quentin Durward*, which R. H. Hutton described as the best sensational story ever written, and for *The Fortunes of Nigel*, which is a good deal better. For continental travel I should myself recommend *Daniel Deronda*. You ought to have a book, and it should be a good book, and a long book, and a tolerably dull book.

*Winning a Bursary.*

I KNOW one man who found his ecstasy when he was a child of thirteen, and the winner to his amazement of a University scholarship. He walked that night the nine miles between the railway station and his home as one who treads on air.

*On First Reading Emerson.*

THROUGH the texture of his homely wisdom ran wandering lights and flames. It was perhaps an era in my small life when I read in his essay on Self-reliance the words *Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string.* The precept was well timed. I was becoming aware that life was spreading out somewhat bleakly before me. I had no right to accept any further help from my father. I had no friend who could do anything for me; there was nothing for it but to do the best I could, and depend on my own resources. Emerson's advice was admirable and salutary. I concluded to take it, to refrain from depending on others, to ask no favours, not to borrow nor to seek for letters of introduction and such-like aids. That was the temper of many young men about the same period.

*In a Hampstead Garden.*

THE sun is dim and hot; the house is empty; the little garden is very cheerful. I went out to see my tortoises, First Timothy and Second Timothy, and found them unusually active and lively. The lawn is full of contented cats drawn from various parts of Hampstead. One of them, Mr. Hopeful by name, who has no home, spends a good deal of time with us, and inculcates wholesale moral lessons on the family. His life is one long struggle for existence, but he carries it on bravely, and somehow gets enough to eat.

*The Border Passion.*

I HAVE various claims to be a Borderer, and in particular a true love for the Border streams. That is the final test. To a real Borderer the river must seem hallowed water. He must revere its banks and channels, its tributaries from their very source, and all belonging to it. When you think of it you perceive that this is the Border passion.

*Peace, Peace!*

THERE are people who delight in explanations. There are some things, I am convinced, which are better left unexplained. I do not wish that everything should be made clear to me.

*Kind Ghosts and Sweet Memories.*

WHAT is the secret that draws us back to the place of childhood? This—that everything speaks to us. The past retouched may be as much as—may be more than—the most vivid present. That tree, that stream, that lone house among the hills, that brown moor, are nothing to you. To me each is a chapter of life. I am never lonely, never silent, for I talk with kind ghosts and the past.

*My Favourite Scenes in Fiction.*

(1) THE proposal of William Crimsworth to Frances Evans in Charlotte Brontë's *The Professor*, chap. xxiii.

(2) The scene in the postmaster's house at Fairport in Sir Walter Scott's *The Antiquary*, chap. xv.

(3) The scene in the Rainbow public-house in George Eliot's *Silas Marner*, chap. vi.

*Beginning of "The Cornhill."*

WE got on loan an early volume of Thackeray's *Cornhill*. This generation does not understand how this magazine penetrated every corner of the land, bringing with it not gossip and detective stories and process blocks, but the best writing of the best minds.

*Home after Years.*

THE past did not really come over me till I looked at some of the volumes which had been my cherished friends. How true it is that we do not alter much! The externals change and the surroundings, but in our inmost souls we are what these early years and teachers made us. We have been out in a wider world, and listened to those who talked with more authority, but we carry all they say to our old rulers, and abide by the word they speak. I spread out the volumes of Hazlitt in the "native pewter"—by which I mean the original editions in large black type with boards—and turned to a few pages which brought

many things back with a rush. There are no snakes in Ireland, and there should be no selections from Hazlitt in English. "Time in his own grey style" has taught you to judge the judges, but the impulses they gave you can never die. Lowell was one of my early idols, and for this reason I cannot attempt a formal estimate of his work. It has great failings doubtless, but others will point them out. To correct the fathers of our spirits is an unnatural and inhuman thing. In nothing was Lowell more successful than in the now unfashionable business of making a florilegium. He was the man to go over the old dramatists and pick out the phrases of pure crystallisation. He has done something in this way which meant a great deal in days when the nerves trembled under the slightest breath of divine air. And were I to walk over Coreen hill again on an autumn afternoon, the old music would still keep me company.

"Cover her face: mine eyes dazzle; she died young."

"What is death?"

The safest trench i' th' world to keep man free  
From Fortune's gunshot."

"Virtue is ever sowing of her seeds;  
In the trenches for the soldier; in the wakeful study  
For the scholar; in the furrows of the sea  
For men of our profession; all of which  
Arise and spring up honour."

"The great man is set  
Among us pigmies with a heavenlier stature,  
And brighter face than ours that we must leap  
Even to smite at."



“ The Coliseum stood out dark  
With thoughts of ages : like some mighty captive  
Upon his death-bed in a Christian land,  
And lying, through the chant of Psalm and Creed  
Unshriven and stern, with peace upon his brow,  
And on his lips strange gods.”

After all, is it so great a misfortune that we cannot separate ourselves from our past history ?

### *A Gentle Day.*

I AM sure of one pleasant evening at least every three months—that on which I read the new volume of *The Dictionary of National Biography*. It arrives always in the morning, and through all the day my demeanour to printers is so gentle and considerate that they anticipate my early death. Let us not grudge them their brief happiness.

### *Presents.*

IT is no kindness to give me a huge volume of Gustave Doré's pictures, for I detest them. Neither do I take any pleasure in a complete set of a certain lady novelist's works bound in morocco. I would not willingly give them house room. But if you speak of a certain Baskerville Greek Testament in a most noble and pleasing type, or an early edition of Ben Jonson's *Lyrics*, or a first edition of Hazlitt's *Table Talk*—that is quite another matter.

*A Favourite Flower.*

MY daughter had the temerity once to ask George Meredith what was his favourite flower, and he answered—the pale iris. If you asked me I should be obliged to tell you that my favourite flower was the hyacinth, for I think there is nothing so beautiful in the world as a bed of hyacinths in moonlight.

## PILGRIMAGES

*Brussels in 1891.*

I WENT as usual to see the house inseparably associated with Charlotte Brontë. It still bears the name of Héger, and the surroundings visibly deteriorate. There are now but few visitors and these almost all American. Wonderful to say, the courteous gentleman at the head of Cook's office had never once been asked for its whereabouts during twenty years. But *Villette* has some sale in Brussels, the Americans buy it. They do not know that more charming if less finished work, *The Professor*, and that heroine I have been true to from boyhood, Frances Evans Henri.

*Round-about Tours.*

IT is hard to believe that purely rural life in France is as happy as some make it out. One looks at the dreary farms in the darkness and wonders what the occupants are about. Are they telling stories about the Black Pig which guarded a treasure with a red key in its mouth ; or about the Orleans beast with a man's face and bat's wings, which left nothing of travellers but their hat and boots ; of the wolves which

in heavy falls of snow used to enter the towns ; or of the chaffeurs, the bands of thieves who scorched the feet of their prisoners till they revealed the whereabouts of their possessions ?

*Verona and Ruskin. .*

I PAUSED for a night at Verona, moved thereto not so much by memories of Shakespeare or Dante as by Ruskin's famous comparison between that city and Edinburgh. Nobody will regret two days in Verona, but there is no getting over the squalid decay of the place. It is a painful and not an interesting melancholy that oppresses one in most parts. The comparison with Edinburgh is not one Verona can bear ; but the situation is picturesque, and some of the sights remain, however doubtful the identifications may be. Juliet's tomb, where she sleeps after the heat of her passionate love, the Scaliger tomb, with its suggestion of Mark Pattison's unfinished work, the Roman remains, and one or two of the churches, make it worth while to be “a gentleman of Verona” for a time. There are, too, the statue and the memories of Dante and his bitter years.

There was much talk about Ruskin in the hotel at Verona. A lady took and kept the lead, on the ground that a near relative of hers had a complete set of Ruskin's works acquired at vast expense. I did not venture to question this pre-eminence, but who is it that says, “The relation to the King which consists

in your brother having seen the Duke of York is generally considered unsatisfactory, and only becoming in an Irishman to boast of ? ”

*The Duty of Pilgrimage.*

PLACES to me are interesting chiefly in connection with the people who have lived in them. I like a guide who will show me the invisible, or rather recall what I knew, and put it in its true setting. In the day when all good things come, there will be an honoured place for the loving recorder of literary associations. How can one understand Jane Austen's novels properly who has not been in Hampshire, and in Bath, and in Lyme Regis ? Who can understand Scott who does not know the borderland ? Who can understand Tennyson who has not been in Somersby ? But these ideas are much in advance of the age. Instead of criticising Mr. Shorter's insertions, I should be inclined to wish that he had inserted more. Brill is interesting to me because it was there that Jowett did much of his Thucydides ; Buckingham because Arthur Symons was born there, the son of a Wesleyan minister.

*Florence.*

IT is a trial to carry an ignorant, empty head through such a city as Florence. I could not but reflect what a visit to Florence must be to Mr. Gladstone and Dr. Church, with thoughts of the past coursing through

their minds in torrents. I am not going to inflict Baedekêr upon poor readers. Three things I wanted to see in Florence: the mausoleum of the great Florentine dead—the Church of St. Croce—the house of Michael Angelo, and Sarto's drawing of his fatal auburn-haired wife. (Has Browning ever written anything better than that story?)

*Venice.*

AS for St. Mark's, its tarnished magnificence and its friendly and sheltering aspect are what remain with one. I think Mr. Howells speaks of this homely grandeur; at any rate I never felt in a great church before such a sense of comfort.

*Shere, Surrey.*

I GO to Deira, because it is desirable, in the hard-worked vocabulary of the Carlyles, to "vary the schane." No matter how beautiful a place is, you sometimes wish to be in another. The sole good of your going away may be to make you appreciate your home the better, but that is a very great good, for many people miss happiness by failing to understand that wherever they sit is the head of the table, is the centre of the universe. And Londoners, wherever they live, never get out of the roar. A post every hour and other accessories of civilisation wear the most equable nerves. You must get to where there is no gas.

*The Riviera.*

NICE is a large town always, and at present there are hosts of visitors. Most of them have considerable difficulty in getting through the day, and yet this is practically the only library in Nice, and I have never seen it crowded. I estimated some weeks ago that a good average of reading was twenty-five volumes a year, and I see that a friendly critic in the *St. James's Gazette* remarks that I can have but little time personally for reading. Well, I do not know. I think I average about two books a day, and judging from my observations at Nice, I should think this is decidedly above the average.

*New Orleans.*

THERE is no more memorable city in the world than New Orleans is, or was, when I saw it in 1896. It was so utterly unlike the rest of the American cities. Who can forget that great central road which divided the two parts of the town, the one part embracing the Creoles one the French? We were assured that many ancient people had never crossed the Broadway, and I could believe it. Who can forget the general moistness and warmth of the atmosphere, the curious suggestion of the tropics, marred only by the indefinable fear of sudden fever? At that time the drains ran open in the street. Who can forget all the extraordinary cemeteries—those huge

masses of granite slowly sinking in the sand? The mere sight of the Mississippi was in itself enough to stir the imagination. The city at that time was full of intellectual activity. Mr. Cable had made it alive for us, especially by his book, *Dr. Sevier*, the scene of which was laid in the St. Charles Hotel, where we lived. Multitudes of the New Orleans people, and especially the Creoles, vehemently denied the correctness of Dr. Cable's representations; but who can deny their charm? Miss Grace King still lives, and is universally honoured for what she has done in her striking fiction and otherwise for New Orleans and Louisiana. At that time the daily papers were conspicuous for their literary interest and excellence. Were there ever such long streets? In one case I remember the numbers ran to over two thousand. The fires of the Civil War had by no means died down into grey ashes, as I remember to my cost, having rashly engaged in a discussion with a very brilliant old lady, the widow of a planter.

### *Steps Down.*

I LOVE the Riviera, and some of the pleasantest recollections of my life are associated with it. It is not the least of these pleasures to step into an old circulating library. I always feel a thrill of joy at my first visit to such places, especially if I see that there is a room downstairs. When there is a place of this



kind you may be sure that old books have been kept. If all the rooms are on one floor the books are sifted from time to time, and all you can get is the old mixture of Merriman, Crawford, Crockett, and the rest. In the Nice library there are only two steps of descent, which is not enough. There is a dear delightful place in Florence where you go down quite a long stair, and where all the books have been kept for more than fifty years. Money will not buy them. One might spend a winter there pleasantly.

*To the Church of Archdeacon Hare.*

YOU drive in to Hurstmonceaux Castle, a noble ruin dear to tourists—few of whom know or care anything about the little church not far away, the Rectory, the Hares, John Sterling, Thomas Carlyle, Daniel Macmillan, Frederick Maurice, or the rest. Never mind. Well, if they care for the ruin, with its “sweet birds,” the clinging ivy, the noble sunflowers, and one another. They do, at least for this last; though parties of two curates and five girls did not seem an ideal arrangement. It is but a little way to the church, and ours were of the “rare feet” that sought the shrine. We were fortunate enough to find the sexton, a sententious but civil man. The church is much as Hare left it—very small and unpretending, but in good repair. I learned from the sexton, to my surprise, that the good Archdeacon came

to be in very straitened circumstances, and that he had to sell the living. The graves of many of the Hares are there—and plainer tombstones never stood over the dead. But some were missing—notably Archdeacon Hare's own wife. She survived him, and died, according to my guide, in poverty. She wished to be beside her husband, but gently acquiesced when told that it must be otherwise. Why should they not side by side wait the Day to be? It is good to see the two or three that loved each other gathered together in His name—the name that will break the turf. I forgot that we are to have cremation, but I fancy when that practice is generally adopted we shall be ready for cremation on the large scale.

We should have liked to see the Rectory, but it was some two miles off. There Hare had his library of 20,000 volumes, and incomparably the best collection of German books to be found in Britain—many of them new to Bunsen. There John Sterling and Daniel Macmillan looked up to Hare as their helper and teacher. I should have liked much to find John Sterling's "reasonable house in one of those leafy lanes in quiet Hurstmonceaux, on the edge of Pevensey level," where he commenced his duties as curate. But I knew the attempt would be vain, for even the whereabouts of the Rectory was hard to discover.

I shall not forget the drive home as the evening fell softly over the sea moor and the scarce-to-be distinguished sea. No scenery is so impressive in its way as a sea moor when seen under the fit shadows, and they were there.

*At Aldworth.*

WE had the precious opportunity of looking at the books in Tennyson's library there. Of course, many were kept in his Isle of Wight residence. What struck me particularly was that the books bore the marks of being very constantly used. It was not a sham library, but select, and selected by a great genius who, after a period of partial obscurity, is now coming to assert his supremacy.

## GOSSIP

### *The Thoughtfulness of James Macdonell.*

IN the midst of great lassitude he would rouse himself, go to the table and get out his writing materials, and begin and finish letter after letter to friends in England, or his mother, his sister, his brothers. He was always the most faithful of correspondents. He never neglected the letter of a friend, but would, soon or late, seize time out of his scanty leisure hours to write an answer. Often in later years when he came in from *The Times* office at three o'clock in the morning he would write the answer to some letter that he thought should not wait.

### *A Man who looked Old.*

EVERYBODY dies at last, and therefore Moncure Conway is gone, though he appeared to have been so long on this planet and continued to be so active in his movements that it seemed as if he might live for ever. He was not so old, however, as people thought. I heard once in a club a keen discussion as to his age, the general view being that he was about 130. As a matter of fact, he was only seventy-five, though he looked a great deal older, and he was before the public for more than fifty years.

nothing to depend on but her pen, and with many young lives depending upon her, was nearly always a year's income in debt, and did not trouble herself about it. Lever, however, did trouble himself. I am confident that this impecuniosity took the flavour out of his books. He was an expert in depression. Of this many passages are scattered through his novels.

I am afraid that Lever has many followers in these days among literary people, though how it should be so I do not understand. Surely the difficulties and uncertainties of the literary profession are enough, without incurring another addition—the crushing and terrible burden of debt.

### *The Weariness of Dickens.*

THERE are great authors who would have been far happier, lived longer, and done better work if they had possessed a love of literature. It was largely for the want of this love that Dickens was worn out. He had no city of the mind to flee to, and as the strain of public life became harder and harder he broke down under it, simply for want of shelter.

### *A Visit to The Pines.*

HALE WHITE admired Swinburne very much, and in particular his criticisms of Shakespeare. Swinburne read Hale White's little book on the *Alleged Apostasy of Wordsworth*, and liked it. On

this, my friend, Mr. Watts-Dunton, proposed that I should bring Mark Rutherford to The Pines in order that he and Swinburne might meet. Hale White was willing, and we lunched at the well-known house. Swinburne was not in his best mood, but Mark Rutherford was quite satisfied in serenely contemplating him. At one point, our kind host asked Mark Rutherford if he had read Kipling. "No," was the reply. "I am getting to be an old man now, and I read my Bible." "Oh," said Mr. Watts-Dunton, "that's what I do." Swinburne was brought into the conversation, but he knew Kipling only as the author of music-hall ditties. The "Recessional" was mentioned, whereupon Swinburne said, very unjustly, "Yes, very good; like the 'Psalm of Life,' but not so good."

*A Long-ago Lecture.*

I HEARD part of Mr. Du Maurier's lecture in Prince's Hall, Piccadilly, last week. The platform was a goodly sight, and the stalwart, homely figure of Sir John Millais, drinking in with eager and reverent attention every word of the lecturer, was not the least part of it. Mr. Leslie Stephen, who looks more like Don Quixote than ever, was once or twice very much amused. This could be discovered by a close observer from the gradual processes of change. When a joke strikes Mr. Stephen he begins by drooping his head. Then he turns it to one side. Then he sits up in his chair, and a smile begins to dawn on his face.

*Mrs. Lynn Linton.*

ON the whole, Mrs. Linton liked and respected Dickens. He was bright, and gay, and winsome, a strong and faithful friend, and especially one who declined to be lionised, who stuck to his own order, who knew that the biggest lion of the class "not born" is never received as an equal by the aristocracy. His great fault, in her opinion, was the strain of hardness in his nature. His pride was passionate, and he never forgave where he thought he had been slighted, and he was too proud and self-respecting for flunkeyism. In the latter years of his life no one could move him, although he was as staunch and loyal a friend as ever lived; and, thanks to that strain of inflexibility, he never knew a shadow of turning, never blew hot and cold in a breath. Thackeray she liked even better. She regarded him as generous, indolent, loving, tender-hearted, and very flexible. She knew the secret history of both these eminent men as few did, but never put it in print. Both men, she said, could and did love deeply, passionately, madly, and the secret history of their lives has yet to be written. It will never be written now, and it is best that it should not be.

## RETIREMENT

*Dillon and Bickell.*

DREKJ DILLON, the celebrated foreign correspondent, was asked by me where, out of all the many towns he had lived in, he had found a favourite—whether he had made up his mind to retire to one when his incessant work was over. To this Dr. Dillon replied, without hesitating a moment, “I should like to settle down wherever Dr. Bickell settled down. He is my chief friend, and the opportunity of seeing him every day would give me quite enough in the way of society.”

Dr. Bickell was the Roman Catholic Professor of Hebrew at Innsbruck, and is now dead. He was described to me by Wellhausen as one of the first seven Hebrew scholars in the world, and he was much oppressed by the difficulties of the Higher Criticism. But he ended, I believe, very quietly.

*A Thought for nearly Fifty Years.*

A FRIEND to whom I mentioned the subject of this letter said: “What is the good of speaking about retirement when we have nothing to retire upon?” To this I answered that it does not



by any means follow that because we do not retire or cannot retire, we should not think of retiring. For myself, I have thought about it ever since I was twenty-three, and I believe there are many like me.

*A New Start.*

**E**NNUI, in the full sense of the word, is one of the most terrible things that can befall a man.

The real way of fighting ennui is to work in one way or another.

I should like very much to retire, but if I did I should wish to have a fresh start, to go and live in a new country, learn a new language, study a new literature. I cannot understand how the life quite without occupation should be other than a miserable and unbearable thing.

*A Self-confident Place.*

**I** DIVIDE my time between London and Surrey, and I envy no man. I have lived happily in various places, but should I have again to change, I should like to live in a place that believes in itself. Many places do not, and in proportion as they do not they are uncomfortable. Boston and Edinburgh, for example, believe in themselves.

*Where shall I go?*

**I**T would be a great thing for me to be within reach of a bookstall. There is nothing pleasanter in the country than to go down in the afternoon and see

what books have come in, and take one home. Very likely the book is nothing. It is, however, a pleasure to look at it and to take it back the next day and get another.

I should like to live where the friends of the past could reach me if they cared to come.

I have said nothing about climate, deeply believing that the climate of this country is bad everywhere.

The great thing is to have the day well filled, and so I should like to have evening papers and a post the last thing, so that I might always be able to look forward and to escape from tedium.

## PECULIAR JOYS

### *Visiting a Small Town.*

EVERY man has his own idea of enjoying himself, and two of my favourite pleasures may have no charm for many of your readers. One is to visit a small town for the first time, get a room taken in one of the inns, and then proceed to "pervade the place" (as A. K. H. B. says) until the general character of it reveals itself. If there is any little height in the neighbourhood, or, better still, a bridge; see it from there. Then have a look at the booksellers' shops, read all the signs and note any name you have never seen before, watch the people and see if there are any characteristic faces, and when the pleasant twilight comes, go back to your inn, a readable book, and a modest supper. It is the fashion nowadays to run down country towns, and with one exception, I know no author of repute who has a good word to say for them.

I love no places so well and especially on drowsy summer afternoons, when you see everywhere at the end of a street the green that girds it.

Another pleasure is to receive an eagerly anticipated book, which you are sure will make you a richer, because wiser and happier man. To get the book in the city, to note with satisfaction that it is tolerably

long, to take a good look at its binding, to travel home in the train with the feeling that it is there, and that you have an evening before you to cut it up, and then begin and go through with it—what more can life give ?

*Half Awake, Speeding South.*

ALMOST the pleasantest feeling I know is to lie half awake in a sleeping-car when the train is at full speed. You feel that you are doing your duty and accomplishing your journey ; and at the same time you experience the utmost sweets of idleness. Then there are wonderfully beautiful and surprising effects of the vanishing darkness and the conquering light seen, as you cannot see them otherwise, in the rush to meet and embrace the morning.

*Poetry.*

I WALKED not long ago at evening over the Black Moor near Deira, and repeated with rapture Shelley's lines :

" Away, the moor is dark beneath the moon,  
Yellow clouds have drunk the last pale breath of even."

*" A Twa-handed Crack."*

I AM thinking of the best kind of conversation, the conversation between two people ; what the Scotch call " a twa-handed crack." This is almost the culmination of human happiness when it is at its best.

*The Importance of an Early Start.*

TO feel at home with books ; to enter a library as a jockey enters a stable, to be alone with books for days at a stretch, and love nothing so well—these are experiences beyond the reach of those who begin late.

## *II. THE WRITING PROFESSION*

*Not even Mr. Gissing has been able to obscure the true and deep pleasure which the most despised of literary practitioners contrive to get out of life. We are convinced there is nothing like it. It is part of the same sunshine that warms the great publisher in Albemarle Street, Paternoster Row, or Bedford Street. Whoso has spent his life with books has had his portion in the earth, though he be that despised, browbeaten, shabby, half-starved, dingy, and happy being—the poor author of New Grub Street.*

## PRAISE FOR AUTHORS

### *Their Glamour.*

THOUGH I have known many authors and endured much trouble from them, I cannot help relaxing to a man who has produced a book of any kind.

### *Their Charm and Value.*

THE only class of people for whom as a class I have profound respect is the class of authors. If a man has but published a volume of poems at his own expense, he is interesting to me. And wherever I roam, the interest of scenery and history is always subordinate to the interest of biography.

### *The Chivalrous Mark Twain.*

HOW upright and manly he was, how sound, how wholesome, how capable of noble indignations, is shown in his magnificent defence of Harriet Shelley ! No finer exhibition of the true spirit of chivalry exists in literature.



## BLAME FOR AUTHORS

### *Jane Findlater in Danger.*

SHE has her own thoughts, and her own way of uttering them. Her great danger is that this book may get a kind of success, and that she may be encouraged to write in all directions for little libraries of fiction. If she does so, there will soon be an end of her and her vein. If she is true to herself, and writes only when she has something to say, and publishes only when she has said it, she may step into the first rank. But I know how it will be. In October there will be one big six-shilling book by Miss Findlater, one at half-a-crown, and another at one-and-sixpence. Who can resist destiny ?

### *The Length of Letters.*

I HAVE scarcely received a letter from authors that might not have been shortened with advantage.

### *Mrs. Gaskell.*

THERE was something reckless in Mrs. Gaskell, or, if recklessness be too strong a word, let us say enthusiastic. She could rise to a judicial view, but she was not always judicious. Admitting to the full the sterling and striking merit of her Brontë biography,

I cannot but feel that she treated the two grim and solitary men at the old parsonage—the father and the husband—with unintentional cruelty.

*The Minor Poet.*

I DO not wonder that editors are more and more refusing to use verses in their publications. There is no contributor half so troublesome, so exacting, so conceited as the minor poet.

*Their Early Conceit.*

THERE are perhaps no men in the world who, as a class, need to be snubbed more severely than young authors.

*Their Haste and Rashness.*

TO every budding genius I should say, "Be content with few engagements; publish nothing that is not the very best you can write; do not scatter your books over all the publishers; be reserved, careful, conscientious, and your reward will come." But few of our new writers take such advice. They begin, let us say, at thirty. By forty they have produced as many books as Sir Walter Scott. The public is sick of them, and they have thirty or forty years before them, for as a rule they are athletic, take much exercise, cannot smoke, and go blind early. Their outlook is dreary enough.

## ADVICE TO THE LITERARY ASPIRANT

*“ Fly low.”*

I WOULD say to the literary aspirant, Choose your target and fly low. Count the number of your words, and adapt them to the usual requirements of the periodical. See that your subject is in a line with the subjects treated in the paper. Above all things, be sure that what the editor prints is what the editor likes, that originality, unless of a very compelling nature, is not required, and that there is a fashion in journalism as well as in other things. If I may presume to say so, many disappointments might be avoided in that way. I have been writing all my life since an early age, and have only had two rejections from editors. This was because I aimed definitely and was not too ambitious. The great thing is to get a beginning. Never refuse any work that is offered to you till you are in a position to do so. Never grumble at the terms you receive unless you have better offers available. I read the other day of a famous American doctor, who, when dying, attributed all his success to the fact that he had never declined any labour which he was asked to perform.

*Feel your Way.*

I HAVE no rejected manuscripts, for the simple reason that I began by aiming very low, and made tolerably sure that my manuscript would be accepted before I sent it.

*On Asking for Criticism.*

AS to criticising little stories and poems, what is the good? If they are not accepted for publication, that is a criticism. I confess I have written hundreds of letters of criticism, but I never knew any of them do any good. I am afraid in some cases they have simply irritated the recipients. What is the use of saying a string of verses are doggerel? It may be quite true, but it is not pleasant. Yet it is all that can really be said about nine-tenths of the poems that are forwarded to editors. They are written by people who do not know what poetry means.

*Be Yourself.*

THERE is no human individuality that cannot in its measure be made interesting. If we must write without a special call, let us be ourselves and nothing else, only let us be our better selves. Let us not cease to breathe from the four winds of heaven; let us not give up our enthusiasms, let us not grow callous and tarnished with the passing of years.

*Pack flat.*

W<sup>OE</sup> unto you who roll your manuscripts !  
 Woe unto you who tie them cunningly with  
 thick strings !

*On Getting an Interview.*

O<sup>H</sup> ! how vehemently I agreed with Miss Klickmann when she tells the truth about interviews. There is nothing that irritates editors more than personal interviews. There are those who think they can explain themselves much better in a conversation than in a letter. But this does not alter the case. Everything can be done and properly done by correspondence. After all, everything depends upon the manuscript. If the editor likes it he will take it. If not, interviews will leave him unmoved. It must always be borne in mind that these are overworked, understaffed, hustling times in a very complex age ; and the newspaper and magazine office feels this more keenly than any other branch of the business world, simply because periodicals must reflect the spirit of their day and generation, and keep the readers in touch with all that is going on—and “all” is a large and constantly changing order at present. This means that the editorial offices are always more or less in a state of tension ; there is no time to spare for interviews that may prove fruitless ; the day is seldom long enough to get in all that is certain to be profitable to the paper.

*A Thousand an Hour.*

**O** YE slow, judicious, careful people who take an hour to turn a sentence and a day to write a paragraph, and a week to discover the fact, be ye warned in time ! Journalism is no profession for you. The man who cannot write a thousand words fit for print in an hour is a man who should choose some other profession.

*A Warning.*

**W**HEN you see a man put out one difficult book after another with a circulation steadily sagging, with a spirit inflamed and rebellious, you see a tragedy. One such, whose name I will not mention, died among us lately. He had, I think, a far more genuine literary gift than many who were popularly successful, but he stiffened and hardened and went to the wall. Of course, if a man cannot condescend to a certain style of writing and cannot bring over the public to like his style of writing, it is best for him to give up authorship.

*The Writer of "Dickins."*

**W**HAT is to be said about a would-be author who writes "Dickins"? His case is hopeless. It would take him at least twenty-five years to be sufficiently well educated to be worth an income in journalism. People may think that these things

are trifles, but they are no trifles, for they mean that all the writer does is untrustworthy, rotten, and abominable.

*On Becoming a Publisher.*

A VERY common delusion is that a man may be useful in a publisher's office, although he is not conceited enough to think that he can write or that he can advise in the publication of books. This, if possible, is even more wonderful than the other notions I have been condemning. It might be that a genius should suddenly rise from the ground and prove himself a great critic or a great discerner of the trend of literature and the public taste as it is or as it will be. It is just conceivable, I say. But it is not conceivable that an ordinary young man should be of any use in a publisher's office unless he goes through the mill. The common thought appears to be that a young man studying for the Bar, for example, might give a few hours of his valuable time to a publisher and receive an income in return. I have often wondered what some of my friends would say if I sent them young men who were preparing to be journalists and would give them two or three hours' help in their law cases. A lawyer would say that the young man must give himself to the law and must begin at the beginning. Well, publishing is just as much a profession as the law is. It is just as highly technical a calling as watchmaking is. Nobody is of any use who does not give his whole time, and who has not gone

through the training. No first-class publisher would take anyone and teach him the business without receiving a handsome premium, and the chances are that he would not take him for any premium. I will give a few illustrations of what a publisher must know.

In the first place, he ought to understand thoroughly the business of printing, and that business is not learnt in an hour. In the second place, he should know how to buy paper, and that is at once a most important and a most difficult business. Of course, he will have his own experts in these matters, but he ought to be able, and as a rule is able, to control his experts, and to check their judgment. It is not unusual, in fact it is quite common, for publishers to pay premiums to printers for two or three years before they go into publishing. In the next place, he ought to understand all about book-binding. Then he ought to know thoroughly the book market in this country, in America, and in our colonies. It is often of vital importance to know where to put to the best advantage the unsold copies of a book. Whether the book pays in the long-run or not will depend on that. Such knowledge is the result of years and years of watchful experience.

### *Stuff by Post.*

SOME editors watch their contribution box. They read carefully what is sent to them, and pick out the best. Speaking from my own humble but now prolonged experience, I have no faith in that plan. I hardly remember receiving anything of much value



unsolicited. My practice is to look at every paper I come across, and whenever I detect any sign of power in an unknown writer, to keep an eye on him henceforth. Then, if the occasion comes, engage him.

*Advice to the Literary Aspirant.*

I DOUBT if there is one editor in a hundred who ever looks at a dirty manuscript. It is a perpetual source of wonder to me that women are incomparably the worst offenders in this respect. They seem to send stories to all the editors, and as they come back they simply tie them up again and put them in the post. I consider it the duty of self-respecting editors to destroy filthy manuscripts, so that their brethren may not be further troubled.

*To the Young Writer.*

TO have a style that is not derived, that is noble and new, you must have a powerful and lonely personality; you must have an individuality that is distinct, presentable, and impressive. Style is the expression of a temperament, and no matter how the artist may strive, in the end he will reveal himself. Even if he says with Newman, *Secretum meum mihi*, or with Browning, "Mine remains the unproffered soul," he stands in essentials naked and open to discerning eyes. The fullness of the self-disclosure may be impeded or the reverse. Meredith's riddle is harder to read than that of many. On the other hand, Thackeray's writings were if not more, at least more

intentionally, tinged with individual peculiarity than those of his contemporaries.

But individuality, however singular and potent, is not enough to make a man a great writer. Among men and women who have never written anything one has found personalities at least as striking and memorable as any among living authors. I could find you in the works of unknown Muggletonians passages as noble as any in Bunyan. But the writers could not maintain themselves at a level. They had no literature and no art. The personality must have the power of expression, power of selection, and of judgment. He will find that the more peculiar his outfit and experience are, the less satisfactory is the instrument of language laid to his hand. He may even speak with Flaubert of a language worn down to the thread, worm-eaten, and debilitated and cracking under the fingers at every effort to use it. He will not despair ; he will think of how the instrument may be sharpened and tempered till it can do its work.

## CRITICS AND CRITICISM

### *An Attractive Fellow.*

IT is always easy to be on good terms with a man who is on good terms with Hazlitt.

### *The Eternal Chance.*

SO long as books are bought and read, so long the critic will have his chance. Criticism is not, never has been, and never will be a particularly remunerative occupation ; but it has its compensations, real and great.

### *The Great Critic.*

THE great critic knows how to commend, but almost anybody can get together a few bitter and brutal phrases.

### *The Test.*

THE man who does not see that Hazlitt is the first of English critics may honourably fulfil his duties as a member of society, but he will never be a bookman.

*The Best Judgments.*

IF I had space I should undertake to prove that the verdict of the best contemporary critics on a book has not been wrong more than once in a thousand cases. Observe, it must be an honest verdict.

*Friend and Friend.*

SOME of the finest pieces of English criticism are those in which a friend interprets, praises, and blames a friend.

*A Hard Business.*

MANY people think that authors are very vain, especially if they are successful. Authors who have not published are usually very vain. Authors in the flush of their first success are apt to be pardonably elated ; but where you have a writer with real stuff in him, he is much more likely, after a year or two, to suffer from morbid depression than from undue exaltation. Imaginative work is a heavy tax on heart and brain. It makes the practical anxieties and difficulties of life more formidable than they should be. The worker is haunted by the thought that his powers may give out, that his place may be taken by others, that he may not be able to provide for those dear to him. Critics should be careful. I spent an evening lately with a young novelist in the happy little home which he had made for himself, his wife, and his little child. He seemed to look round it as one who could hardly believe that his good for-

tune would last. Going home I bought an evening paper, and found a review of my friend's latest book, in which everything was said that could possibly insult and wound him, everything also that was calculated to damage his work with publishers and editors. Lowell was right when he said that after all literature is a hard business. I for one mean to indulge in the "noble pleasure of praising" and to enjoy the triumphs of my friends to the last laurel leaf.

*Criticising Poetry.*

I HAD many arguments with Watts-Dunton as to the way which long poems should be treated, contending that the best bits, or a few lines of inspired parts, should be quoted like separate diamonds. Watts-Dunton, who was a very great critic, took the opposite view. He was of an opinion that long extracts should be given from poems of great length. He would have inserted "Kilmeny" in the "English Poets," and I agree that Kilmeny should be given as a whole. But as Mr. Gosse will be the first to recognise, poems must abide their trial. Some of his own, I think, will do so triumphantly, for their marmoreal beauty.

*Housman's Masterpiece.*

ONE of the kings of living critics once said in my hearing that *A Shropshire Lad* was one of the very few books of our time which would certainly live for a hundred years,

*My Critic.*

LET me have a critic who knows more than I do, or at least who has read in directions I have not followed out. Let me be able to see that he has read and pondered and understood all I have written. His praise will then be very sweet. His criticisms will be thankfully received and considered, even when they are not accepted.

*The Life of Manning.*

WHEN the unfortunate critic has read himself almost blind, he begins to despair of the end ever coming, of ever obtaining deliverance from the body of this death.

*Author and Critic.*

THERE is a story of a backward lover who was driving with his sweetheart one cold afternoon. She seemed to be out of spirits, and the lover asked her how she felt. "I feel blue," was the reply. "Nobody loves me, and my hands are cold." "You should not speak in that way," was the reply. "God loves you and your mother loves you, and you can sit upon your hands." Here, in a parable, we have the everlasting relation between the author and the critic,

## ON DISCOVERING AUTHORS

### *The Truth of the Matter.*

IT would be the height of folly to imagine that those who are said, (never by themselves) to be discoverers of new authors, really accomplish much. As a rule, genius finds a way to express itself sooner or later, and any who takes it upon him to set his friends to writing will burden the world with some bad books, as a set-off against gladdening it with some that are good. What is more important, the public is not to be deceived. You may bring an author before it a few weeks or months sooner than would have been the case without you, but you will not succeed in palming off anyone that does not deserve success. Whenever a writer gains the public ear, your praise can do little either to help or to hinder him. It is wonderful how quickly, and almost as if by instinct, readers turn away from an author who begins to fall below himself. A subtle thrill of understanding seems to penetrate the community at once.

### *The Author's Revenge.*

I OFTEN wonder that authors do not kill their so-called discoverers. The temptation must be very great.

*The Meeting.*

WHAT strange surprises one meets with often when he first sees in the flesh one who has been a friend, or at least an acquaintance, in the spirit ! Not only are the face and figure different, but the inspired voice growls about the weather, puts questions about the train, or does something equally attractive. In these cases one always desires another chance. Every great spirit comes to the window now and then, and is unforgettably visible if you catch the hour.

*The Evening with the Author.*

FACES often tell falsehoods. Talk reveals little. Let a man live for a month in constant intercourse with the most brilliant society in London, and write down everything he hears worth remembering, and the record will not stretch very far. In fact, he will wonder at the passion, the insight, the despair which moved him so mightily in the books of the timid, commonplace man with whom he has spent a long and barren evening.



## REWARDS OF LITERATURE

### *Payments.*

WE are exceedingly sceptical about the "prizes" of literature. We shall see. As a matter of fact, we do not know of any living writer who receives as much as was paid in some cases to Anthony Trollope. George Eliot and Dickens received prices which no publisher would pay to any living authors.

### *A Journalist's Income.*

VERY few journalists can afford to be absent for a long time on holiday. What they must do is to set their teeth, and go on, in the hope of being able to retire before the power of enjoyment has left them.

As to the amount of work they do if they earn anything that approaches a large income, it is simply beyond belief. I shall put down one of these days some facts on the subject. I know journalists who are doing without complaint something like 60,000 words a week. This means an enormous amount of reading, for the journalist who is not continually reading and refreshing his mind will soon become stale, flat, and unprofitable. It follows that no one should enter the profession who is not prepared for the very hardest work that can be imagined.

*Hard to Exceed.*

I HAVE long been inclined to think that, while it is not so difficult as might be supposed to earn a thousand pounds a year in Fleet Street, it is not easy to earn much more.

*Literary Labour.*

THOUGH much of the best work in the world has not been adequately paid for, it has rarely failed to open the way for more generous payment.

## AUTHORESSES

### *The Writer of "Uncle Tom."*

IF the light of genius does not burn in her novels, I doubt if it is anywhere to be found in American literature. I agree with Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, who herself had more than a touch of genius, that Mrs. Stowe was the greatest woman America has produced, and I make my appeal to another woman of high genius, George Sand. As those who have read George Sand's wise and brave and sweet letters know, she was a critic of no ordinary power. What does George Sand say of Mrs. Beecher Stowe? Exactly the right thing, I venture to say. Her words are: "Mrs. Stowe is all instinct; it is the very reason that she appears to some not to have talent."

### *George Eliot.*

WAS she happy, then? Assuredly not. She had compensations, but the general impression of her life and letters is profound melancholy. She did not, I think, part with her early faith so absolutely and so easily as is generally thought. Very few do part with the beliefs in which they were nourished, however they may modify their expression,

and however far behind they may leave them in practice. The conscience of her youth tortured her, and made her tremble. She was never made for defiance. She was born to be a moralist, a Mrs. Grundy of a very noble type, advising and warning passionate youth with an uplifted finger: "Now, my dear." Her books show that she was profoundly convinced that no woman who violated the law of honour could ever escape the consequences. What is more puzzling is that she has very little pity, if indeed she has any pity, for any woman who is the victim of her weakness. The story of Hetty is not so cruel as the story of Mrs. Transome, but it is cruel. We are made so to feel the emptiness, the worthlessness, the senselessness of Hetty, that her fall affects us scarcely more than the fall of a mantelpiece ornament.

*Jane Austen.*

I KNOW of one article on Miss Austen which is really luminous, and which I believe to be by Lord Acton, but I mean to keep the secret of its hiding-place—for reasons.

*Mary E. Wilkins.*

A TRUE and restrained artist, Miss Wilkins has given expression, light, and shadow to an else voiceless and uncoloured life. She is neither the first nor the greatest among delineators of New England.

But she has chosen her own aspect—sober and yet beautiful—like her favourite flower the lilac, with its dull bloom and shy antiquated grace—always seeming a little older than other flowers. The poverty of the proud and dutiful—one of the deepest and least worked sources of pathos—is the theme of her strongest stories. They are strangely impressive ; everything in the life of noble poverty means so much. Duty is the stern ruler, life's hard taskmaster, breaking into a smile at the last of it.

*Their Sensitiveness.*

POPULAR writers of religious stories are particularly rare, and can command a capital price for their work. There are a few cases of brilliant success—such, for example, as that of Mrs. Henry Wood, who completely changed the fortunes of a struggling household. But I have known many lady novelists, and on the whole I doubt if their lot is happy. They are peculiarly sensitive. When even George Eliot dared not read reviews ; when that humane but leathery person, Harriet Martineau, cherished an undying resentment against her brother for daring to write unfavourably of a book in which she had a part, it need not be expected that weaker women should show superior fortitude. It is not, however, the sneers of critics that are the worst trouble. Women, more than men, are apt to be haunted by the terrible dread that their vein is worked out.

*Mrs. Henry Wood.*

IT may be said that *East Lynne* is rubbish from a literary point of view, and that Meredith was quite right. Would any firm refuse *East Lynne* in these days? If there is anyone that would, I shall be happy to present the principals with a silk umbrella.

*Margot Asquith.*

I AM confirmed in the conviction that a hundred years hence there will be an annotated edition of all that Mrs. Asquith has written, and much of that she will yet write.

*"Pot Pourri from a Surrey Garden."*

THE highest praise that can be given to Mrs. Earle or anyone else is a certificate of fitness to deal with a mass of old letters touching on points of infinite delicacy and difficulty, where the writers are patient, being dead, and when none is living to fight their battle. Mrs. Earle's tact and good feeling are simply infallible. One may easily read between the lines and see where she has left out.

*Writer of "The Schonberg-Cotta Family."*

LIKE nearly all authors who live long, Mrs. Charles had ceased to be conspicuous. She was not very old indeed, somewhere between sixty and seventy ;

but she began her literary career more than forty years ago, and her life had been one of incessant activity. Mrs. Charles was, I think, the most accomplished woman I have ever known, and she had a true touch of genius. She was full of sympathy, and her interests in all that passed around her were to the last undiminished in their eagerness.

## THE JOURNALIST: REMARKS

### *The Journalistic Talent.*

YOU write to a man who has known your subject for years, who has had the most confidential communion with him, who has shared his heart's secrets, and he replies that beyond the general impression of kindness and affection he can tell you nothing. And another, who has perhaps seen the same man but once or twice, can draw a picture with all the force of an etching. You may take a clever man, put him in the most intellectual circles in London, drench him with the best talk for a whole generation, and at the end of it he will write a book without a single contribution to our knowledge of the people he talks about, (witness Sir Frederick Pollock's memoirs and many other books), whereas a quiet observer, (and the people who see never show that they are seeing), takes all in, and will bequeath you a series of portraits you cannot afford to miss.

### *Their Generous Nature.*

NOBODY who knows journalists can fail to like them. There are black sheep to be sure, but I doubt whether there is any profession where there are more good fellowship, more kindness, less base-



ness, less jealousy, less envy than in the profession of journalism.

*His Age.*

A CLERGYMAN, or a doctor, or a lawyer, if he gains a good position, has, as a rule, no difficulty in keeping it. His past is always a shield and a buckler to him. A journalist can hardly live a week upon his past. Day by day he must keep up to his mark, and he is made constantly aware of the great crowd of eager youngsters who long to replace him. I have a vague feeling that the age of journalists is becoming stationary, that they all think it dangerous to go much beyond thirty-two.

*Their Capacity.*

ALL who served us in the senate and on the battle-field were men who made blunders. None of them was a superman—no superman is to be found. Mr. Hamilton Fyfe will admit this. Indeed, he has admitted it. There is, however, a lurking kind of belief that journalists would have managed the war better. There are some of them who believe it themselves, who know precisely the steps which should have been taken, and are fluent on the subject after the event. No one thinks more highly of the brotherhood of journalists than I do. I esteem Mr. Hamilton Fyfe and his work as much as anyone can. There are journalists known to me who might with advantage have had a place in the Government, but

*His Best Gift.*

THERE is a kind of intuition by which journalists can fulfil the invariable law of the newspaper, which is to be interesting.

*The Uncertain Sun.*

NOT a few in my own line of life, though I am afraid they are decidedly in a minority, have a constant feeling that the sun which is shining upon them now will one day very suddenly set. So they are living well within their incomes, and making ready for the darkness and the rain.

## THE JOURNALIST: TRAINING

### *Canton.*

IT does not matter how early you rise if you do nothing when you get up. It does not matter how much you do for the sake of your health, if you are a healthy good-for-nothing. You will never become intelligent by buying books and arranging them neatly, and treating them like bits of furniture. You must get the books into your souls.

### *A Foreshadowing.*

FOR journalism a course of study could be drawn up as precise, as definite, as useful, as for any other profession.

### *Getting Rid of the Unfit.*

LAY great stress on this—any properly conducted school of journalism would put it among its prime duties to send back to their professions those who were obviously unfit. This would be a very great service.

*Art of Omission.*

ONE of the main problems of the journalist is to decide which half ought to be left out. Take, for example, a descriptive report of a public meeting. It wants the highest and almost the rarest form of journalistic ability just to give the points of true salience and nothing beyond them. Many clever journalists have a knack of missing the very best things. The great rule is to pick out for print just those things which you tell to your people when you go home. It is wonderful how a three hours' meeting may be described graphically by any wife to any husband in a few minutes. But somehow it seems very difficult for the journalist to put himself in the position of a narrator. I know that many readers will dissent from me on this point, and say that to do so is the easiest thing in the world. Let us put the matter to a test. Go to a meeting and watch the proceedings, and then read all the reports, and tell me whether I have not said the truth. In the matter of sermons, in particular. I have not known more than one or two journalists who could pick out unerringly the significant sentences.

*How to Read.*

I DO not know half a dozen people in the world who can read. They go on so slowly, or if they make speed they miss pages. You can train your eyes in such a way that almost at a glance they will take in a

printed page, and this will give ample leisure for reading everything.

*Valuable Assets.*

CONSIDER the advantage of being able to write shorthand, or to understand French. The use of such accomplishments may appear to be remote, but it is not really remote. All such possessions can in the end be put out to usury, and when that is done there is no reason to apprehend indigence. I saw the other day a statement innocently made that in Canada, people who will work hard, and who do not insist too narrowly on hours of employment, are exceedingly valued. No doubt. They are valued everywhere. It is just that extra that makes all the difference, that power to labour and to think, that zeal and goodwill in co-operation which everyone is seeking for, and which no one willingly parts with when he finds it. I could tell how in my profession such men are desired. I could tell, also, how rare they seem to be.

*About Dictation.*

THE effect of dictation is, I think, to make style somewhat clearer and more spirited. Against this is to be set the drawback that you use more words, and tend to diffuseness. I find, working six days a week, and taking one clear holiday, that I can do with perfect ease from 15,000 to 18,000 words a week. But when the week is cut up in any way, I find it enough to do from 10,000 to 12,000.

*A University Education.*

I USED to think that a university education was of little value to a journalist, but I have changed my mind. A university education will teach any man worth his salt something about his own ignorance, and will keep him off ground which is dangerous to him. It ought to preserve him from an overbearing and reckless arrogance, and it will, to a certain indefinable extent, influence his whole method. But the journalist should know a great deal more than is taught at the university. The general qualification, then, is knowledge ; and of special qualifications there is hardly one, except the ability to write shorthand. Many eminent journalists have done very well without this. Nevertheless, the accomplishment is a valuable one. It very often smooths the path for a beginner, and in time of crisis it is something to fall back upon. Journalism cannot in the strict sense be taught ; but if a young man begins in a good office, with the ability to write a verbatim note, he will be able to learn much if he has any capacity. To get a start as a journalist one must either have considerable literary ability, or a knowledge of shorthand.

*On Being Interested.*

BY far the first qualification is interestedness. I mean the faculty of being interested in people, in events, in newspapers, in books, in everything. A very great deal hangs upon this. I am sure men are born with this quality or without it, and that it cannot

be acquired. You may think that everybody is interested, and this is true, but the longer you study the race the more clearly you will perceive that the great majority of people are interested in very few subjects. Most people are self-centred. They are always thinking of how other people will affect their lives, of how circumstances will be favourable or unfavourable for them. They have no art in conversation, they like to hear themselves speak, but they do not concern themselves much about what others say, and they never ask questions, never get out of those they meet what they could easily get if only they cared. They read, but their own minds do not go into the reading, and consequently they remember very little. They do not even observe, unless it is with the view of comparing other people with themselves. Now the born journalist is interested by everything. He knows how to unlock the minds of apparently dull people and find much in them to be turned into account. Humanity concerns him. He loves news, he reads many papers, and even buys them if buying be the only way to reading. When he peruses a book his mind is alive all the time, learning, challenging, registering. He is not interested because he hopes to make some use of what he sees and hears—not at all. It is part of his nature to be interested. He is not much concerned with himself. It is the broad life of the world in its great features, and in its little details, which never loses its fascination for him. This I have found true of every great journalist I have known. There is never any difficulty about conversa-

tion with a real journalist once the start is well made. I do not suppose that this will be of much practical use to would-be journalists, for the simple reason that no one will believe that he is not deeply interested in things. People have to learn by hard experience, but a very good test is this—How many papers and magazines do you read in the course of a week? An early love for papers and magazines is the surest sign of the born journalist.



## THE JOURNALIST: EDITING

*A Great Editor: Lord Northcliffe.*

WE were together at a celebration held in honour of the late Lord Burnham, and Lord Northcliffe kindly drove me home. He came into the house and gradually talked with freedom. "I wonder," he said, "if there will be anyone sorry when I am dead?" After a little he answered his own question. "I think there will. I have given employment to many people and at good wages." I reminded him that there was more in it than that, and he acquiesced, and passed from the subject.

*When to Stop.*

CAPITAL is often wasted for long on hopeless enterprises. The prospect of success is held out, and good money follows bad till the coffers are emptied. Unless a paper shows sign of promise and growth within six months after its start, it is as a rule hopeless to carry it on.

*The Ideal Editor.*

THE man is the first consideration. You may raise any amount of money, and very soon spend it, but if the man is not the right one nothing can save you. The ideal editor of a daily newspaper, or of any newspaper, must be interested both in the editing and sub-editing. However good the editing may be, if the news is not well given all is over.

*A New Paper.*

FIRST numbers are very often tragical. After all the fuss has been gone through, after all the countless difficulties have been for the time surmounted, you have placed in your hands the first issue of your new paper. You are sick when you see it, and grow sicker with every page you turn over. The shortcomings, the blunders, the faults of every kind stand out with glaring and appalling clearness. If you could only have a chance of doing it all over again ! But that chance does not come to you. Sometimes the feelings with which one regards the efforts of his friends are hardly less painful. There was a chance and so much depended on it, and now all is over.

For nowadays a thoroughly bad first number is practically beyond retrieval.

Why are the first numbers usually so bad ? It is a mystery. The ablest, the most brilliant, and the most experienced of journalists will turn out for you a first number so execrable in every respect that the

humblest amateur journalist in a country town might be ashamed of it. I am measuring my words. Great firms with endless resources at their back will put out first numbers which are only seen to be at once condemned. There is a fatality about the first number. Among all the first numbers I recollect—and they are very many—I remember only two or three that could be called excellent.

*The First Number.*

CAN anything be done to avert the misfortune of a first number? The only plan is to print specimen numbers before publication, and have them thoroughly and mercilessly criticised. A hundred pounds spent in this way may save thousands of pounds in the future.

It is only when you see your idea materialised that you are able properly to judge of it. You may see that while the project is not impracticable, it requires for its working out far more money, far more time, and far more ability than you had contemplated. Or you may see that the want you sought to supply is already met elsewhere. If you are wise, you will not be satisfied with your own opinion, nor even with what is called expert opinion. Try the paper on an average reader, and see what he or she says.

I ought to say that a bad first number does not necessarily spell failure. There may be capital enough and brains enough to go on till the memory of

the failure is wiped out, and the journal is successful. But even in that event it is probable that thousands and thousands of pounds have to be spent which, if the start had been good, might have been saved.

*To Editors.*

SOME editors throw their nets too wide. They try to hit all classes, and so there is not enough in their paper to hit one. And some aim exclusively at a class too small to keep a journal living. This is the rock on which the most experienced and sagacious pressmen will split. It is very hard to say without actual experiment whether the class addressed is sufficiently numerous, or already well enough supplied with journals of various kinds.

The editor is a purveyor and not a cook. It seems easy enough. Order a joint from Sir James Stephen, a pudding from Mr. Lang, and so on. No. There must be some editorial contrivance, arrangement, suggestion, or the whole will be naught. It was because Anthony Trollope had none of this that he failed so utterly with *St. Paul's*. I could name a magazine which has great power and unlimited capital behind it, but which has failed, and will fail, because of this. A paper is like a meal. Unless well cooked and well laid out it does not tempt, however excellent may be the materials used. The editor need not write, but unless with subtle faculty he permeates the whole, the brute power of money will not carry him through.

*Headlines.*

I SHOULD attach the greatest importance to the manner in which headlines are printed. These may seem small details, but they make all the difference between good cookery and bad cookery.

## THE JOURNALIST: STARS

### *The Noblest Roman.*

THE noblest Roman of them all was Frederick Greenwood. His evolution was a mystery. He was born in the humblest circumstances, began as a printer's devil, and had scanty advantages of education. Yet he grew up to be a scholar and a gentleman in the highest sense of these words. He was so excellent a master of English style that the ablest men of the day gladly served under him and cheerfully acquiesced in his revision of their manuscripts, a revision which was close and unsparing. He carried himself like a great gentleman, and had the manner of an aristocrat, dignified and gracious. He demeaned himself always as a great man dealing with great affairs. To be entertained by him at his club and to walk out arm-in-arm with him, might well make a man proud.

### JAMES MACDONELL

#### I

#### *Before Working.*

AFTER dinner invariably came a game of bezique with his wife. His doctor had forbidden him to work or read directly after dinner. Sitting at a small table by the drawing-room fire, they played their

game. All his life he had made fun of sensible people spending time over cards, and to find himself sitting down deliberately to bezique always amused him. He did it because he thought it a wise direction of the doctor, but it was always under a good-humoured protest. These games were the most light-hearted times of his life. He looked upon the game as a joke. He would sing or whistle, tell funny stories, talk bad French, and enjoy chit-chat.

## II

*Leader-writing.*

AT eight o'clock came coffee, and then play-time was over. He went straight to the writing-table, which always stood in the drawing-room, gathered his materials about him, and began his work. His leaders for *The Times* were mostly written at the office, but sometimes at home between eight and eleven o'clock. He was particular about the paper he used, and his pens and ink. The ink must be thin, new, and blue-black. No other, he said, ran so smoothly. The paper must be unruled, thin, and smooth. The first quarter of an hour was a trial. He would write a few lines, and then tear the sheet across, begin again, grow dissatisfied, tear the sheet across, and begin again. Then he would make a satisfactory start, and after that work proceeded without a pause. He rarely consulted any book or made any stop. Sometimes in a low voice he would ask his wife to verify a quotation or a date or geographical

point. His head was bent over the writing hour after hour, while he laboriously filled sheet after sheet with neat writing. Sometimes he would complain of feeling exhausted, and be refreshed by a slight stimulant. He made no plan of work, no notes. He wrote smoothly and without a break. Sometimes he would get up, walk to the book-shelves, take down a volume, and read a favourite passage, sometimes aloud, sometimes to himself. He said a fine piece of prose from De Quincey or Heine or Ruskin or Landor or Newman refreshed him. Then he would shut the book, take his place at the table, and the writing would proceed again without interruption. About eleven o'clock the leader was finished and sent to the office.

But the leaders were mainly prepared in his room at *The Times* office, where he found it best to write, for there he got the latest intelligence. It was only when he was dealing with subjects of secondary interest that he could write at home. If he wrote on any question of European concern, he had to be at the office, that he might get the telegrams as they came in. The routine of his evenings was then slightly different. After the play-time of bezique was over, he went to the writing-table, and usually wrote and made notes. About nine o'clock he would often lie down on the sofa and sleep for half an hour, looking, alas ! often very worn and tired, so that it went to the heart of the faithful watcher to have to wake him at half-past nine. At that hour he started for Printing-House Square. He took with him a small flask of claret and a few sandwiches. He always walked to the office.



## III

At "*The Times*."

HIS large and comfortable room was that whose windows are the two farthest west on the third tier in the new building, and that looks into the broad street. It was suitably furnished with writing-table and writing-chairs. At his right hand was an electric bell. After writing a few pages the bell was touched, a boy appeared, who silently carried away the copy. It was soon brought back in proofs, so he could correct the first half of his leader before he wrote the end. Often Mr. Delane or Mr. Walter would come in, perhaps from a great debate in the House, or from some dinner-party where they had talked with the magnates of the hour. Or Mr. Delane would show him important letters from potent personages. He always waited to correct his whole leader before he left. About two or half-past he went home, arriving there about three. After a hot supper of bread and milk, he fell asleep at once.

*Griffiths.*

A GALLERY man who did very fine work and is now forgotten was Dr. Griffiths of *The Guardian*. Some of his best sketches in the early eighties are as good and as true as anything I have ever seen. Dr. Griffiths, I believe, died early, and I do not know that any record of him has been written. But when the time comes for writing the history of the eighties—and that will be in about fifty years—his vivid, telling, memorable records will be found worth consulting.

*R. H. Hutton.*

THE Dissenters read him most humbly and patiently. They bore all things from him, as they bore all things from Mr. Gladstone. Week by week they kissed the rod, and made as though they liked it. In one of Mr. Barrie's early sketches he amusingly described the travels of a copy of *The Spectator* from manse to manse. Mr. Hutton was well aware of all this, but it did not alter either his convictions or his feelings. At the beginning he was much out of temper with the predominant party in the English Church, but as time went on the paper became as churchy as *The Guardian*, and with all the fairness of the editors it never was possible for them to get further than that Dissenters had a right to toleration, that is, that they should be exempted from direct persecution.

*James Douglas.*

HE is several men in one. Time will show, but I am inclined to think that he is essentially a student and critic of literature. It has been his fortune to live among the varying winds, to be thrust into the vortex of contemporary life, and to play his part there. But he might have been more at home in the still air of delightful studies, working out books full of learning and thought. As it is, he has managed to give sufficient proof of his exceptional knowledge, and of the patient thinking which is necessary for the best critical work. I have fancied sometimes that in practising

the up-to-date journalism of to-day, in its most up-to-date form, he has found difficulties in locking up the student and scholar at home.

*E. T. Cook.*

WHEN Cook left *The Daily News*, thus losing two editorships within a short time, he gave no outward sign of chagrin, but I know that he felt it very deeply. When he spoke of his experience he said to me that it had been beyond measure untoward, and that if he had known beforehand the perils that lurked in a journalistic career he never would have undertaken it. Of a truth the iron entered his soul.

He had one abiding source of happiness in his literary work. His great edition of Ruskin is a durable monument to his memory. There is no better work of the kind in the English language. Ruskin was indeed well served by Cook. The great master of eloquent prose laid his hand on Cook in his Oxford days, and to the end Cook's admiration never sank or varied.

*W. T. Stead.*

I

WHEN *The Review of Reviews* was at the height of its popularity Mr. Stead one day sent for me, saying he wished to see me, on most important business. I went to his office, and he began—

“You know *The Review of Reviews* is booming?”

“Yes,” I replied,

"I have been thinking of commencing a religious *Review of Reviews*, and I have resolved to do it, if you will go halves with me."

"Have you thought of a title?" I asked.

"Yes. *Gesta Christi* is the title."

"I don't like it," I said.

"No," he replied. "Mrs. Besant doesn't like it, either."

"What has Mrs. Besant got to do with it?" I asked.

"Oh, Mrs. Besant, of course, will do the Labour department."

"Have you any other ideas?" I asked.

"Yes, if you will go in for it, I will start immediately for Rome to get the co-operation of the Pope. That is an absolute necessity."

## II

I MAY repeat the account which Kendal gave me of Stead's first introduction to Carlyle. I have told it in the presence of Mr. Stead, and he did not correct it. When Mme de Novikoff took the young journalist to Carlyle there had been great trouble at Darlington. "How are you getting on at Darlington?" said Carlyle. "Oh, very well," said Stead. "God has gripped us by the belly, and He is teaching us something." This awakened Carlyle's attention, and there was an animated talk. Next time Mme de Novikoff saw Carlyle, he said, "I like that Maister Stead of *The Northern Echo*. I think he is a good

man." That was the origin of the familiar phrase "That good man, Stead."

## III

WHEN it became known that Mr. Stead was on the doomed *Titanic*, everyone who knew him felt sure that, whoever might be rescued, he would not be rescued. They were certain that one with his ardent, unselfish, courageous nature would think least and last of his own personal safety. They imagined him heartening and helping the most helpless on their way back to life. So it fell out, and even among those who had been most hostile to him there was no surprise. The tribute was as precious and significant as any tribute could be. Mr. Stead in the course of his eventful career had struck many hard blows and had received them, but people knew that they possessed in him something of that which keeps the life of a nation green, something essential to its vitality. Whatever his eccentricities and aberrations may have been, the man was to the core brave, unselfish, and chivalrous. The manner of his dying well became him.

## THE JOURNALIST: CONSOLATIONS

*The Acacias of Lausanne.*

I COUNT those happy—even those journalists happy—who for many years have before them the vision of something which shall last in literature, and which shall worthily occupy their thoughts, and the scant margin of their days. The outcome may be nothing. It may extend to little more than a mass of notes intelligible only to the compiler. Yet if it has been a happiness to think of it, if it has made the days short and delivered from ennui, if it has led the mind along congenial paths, and if it has given life an undertone of hope, it is well that the plan was in the heart, that the dream assisted and consoled to the end.

*Cheerful in the Storm.*

THE journalist has his consolations. Unknown as he is, he may plod along under his umbrella with the consciousness that he is doing something to forward beliefs and causes that are dear to him.

## REVIEWS AND REVIEWING

### *A Profound Error.*

I AM sometimes tempted to think that the whole adult population of this country, with not a few of the juvenile population, are prepared to undertake the reviewing of books and imagine that they can at the very least largely supplement their incomes by doing so. It is a profound error to suppose that everybody who is able to read a book is able to write a review of it.

*"Take it from me."*

AS a rule the young do not make good reviewers.

### *Able and Just Hands.*

AS many able hands and just hands will take up a new book of merit and write about it to-day as at any time in our history.

### *Finding Gold.*

THERE is no such pleasure, in a reviewer's life as when he comes across a book of sterling merit by an author previously unknown to him. Then

he legitimately enjoys to the full the noble pleasure of praising. It is not a very common experience by the very nature of the case. To find a sovereign where you expected to find at most sixpence is a surprise. But open and appreciative minds do come on this pleasure sometimes, and it is a pleasure which often leads to much.

*Some Effort Required.*

THE reviewer should be able to invest his criticisms with a little charm ; there should at least be a current in his style ; in other words, it should be possible to read him.

*A General Bookishness.*

I SHOULD lay the greatest stress upon a general bookishness in the reviewer, but this will not serve him if his foundation of scholarship is slovenly and scant. I should also ask from a reviewer the power of reading a book. It is the greatest mistake on earth to suppose that everyone can read. As a matter of fact, very few people can read. The majority even of the well educated take at least twice the necessary time in reading any book, and it would not be too much to say that they take thrice. The ideal reviewer should be able to read as fast as Professor Saintsbury. It is only the quick reader who can hope to have anything like a wide and deep acquaintance with literature. The man who requires six hours in which to read a novel is fatally disqualified.



*The Profession.*

I CONFESS that as time goes on reviewing becomes less pleasant. If it is done conscientiously it is hard work. It involves, if undertaken as a profession, a great deal of very uncongenial reading. If criticism is to be of any value it must sometimes be unfavourable, and the more one knows of the inner life of authors and their difficulties the more he shrinks from giving pain. On the other hand, one pleasure survives, and will, I trust, to the last survive—the noble pleasure of praising. One of the things which make the literary life on the whole a life to be coveted in spite of its continual toil, is that one does have, at times, the chance of helping a good man, the chance of saying a strong word for a good book.

*To the Young Reviewer.*

IF I might say one thing to the young reviewer it would be this : Leave the bitter word unspoken. As a great man said, it is so easy to be sarcastic. There are occasions which justify stern and severe criticism, but reviewers should stand up to men who can hit back. They should not strike the defenceless. One has to live a long time among authors, and know their ways, before he understands how much their books often mean to them.

The kind of review that I most detest is the attack on old writers who have done good work, and are beginning to fail. There is a peculiar brutality in some of these. It is charitable to suppose that they are written

in ignorance. One such review I especially remember. It was a clever and biting criticism of a book by an aged lady, who had done great things in her time, and was then close upon the end. She was dying of cancer, but she had time before she died to read that review.

*An Enemy's Book.*

NO man of honour will ever allow himself to criticise a book by a man who is a personal antagonist. Let him seek refuge if he must in a Salvation Army shelter ; anything rather than run the risk of indulging personal rancour by an apparently honest and candid criticism.

*Difficult and Badly Paid.*

SUCH reviews as appear in the journals of this country are generally done by the staff of the paper. The editor of our best evening journal said to me the other day that he reviewed on an average about six books a week. Reviewing is to many journalists who have other employment a pleasant recreation. Again, there are many very able and cultivated men and women scattered throughout the country, often drearily situated in remote places, who are delighted to have a parcel of new books, and who bring to the criticism of these a great wealth of knowledge and an equal power of literary expression. The openings, in fact, for mere outsiders in the reviewing of books are exceedingly rare. Nor is the work well paid. It is worse paid on the whole than any other

kind of literary work. I will not say that it is absolutely impossible for a clever person to supplement his income materially by writing reviews of books. I know, however, of only a few cases where this is done, and in every case it is done by persons of real accomplishment and faculty. The ordinary reader of books may just as well think that he can supplement his income by making watches as by writing reviews. I will add that review writing is perhaps the most difficult as well as the worst paid branch of journalism. If people, in spite of these discouraging remarks, will persist in believing that they can supplement their income by reviewing, let me suggest to them that introductions are of no use at all, and that the only possible way in which they can have a chance is by sending specimen reviews. There is just a possibility that these will be considered, and that, if they show an altogether exceptional equipment, they may lead to an engagement.

*His Own Patent.*

THERE is a variety of the personal review which I have patented myself. In it you begin with an incident, and close with a continuation of the incident. Thus you are reviewing a book, let us say, by Henry Seton Merriman. You start thus : "One winter in the discharge of my duties as a special correspondent I was compelled to spend some time in Odessa. Those who know that dreariest of towns [here a fair amount about Odessa, which can be got

anywhere, may come in]. I lodged with a singular couple. The husband was a gigantic Russian, the most reserved and reticent of men. His wife was a vivacious little Scotswoman. Almost the only book in their little home was *The Sowers*, by Henry Seton Merriman. My landlady was trying to teach her Russian husband English by means of this book. I had never heard of Merriman before, but to read *The Sowers* is to remember it for ever.

"And now we have another book from the same magic pen." Then comes the review. Well, then, I should finish up with something like this: "Does the reader wish to know the further story of that strangely matched couple?" The rest can be filled up by any reviewer according to his fancy. I do not mean to mock this kind of criticism. By no means. If it is well done it is more likely to be read, and more likely to help a book than any other. And I should not be at all surprised if some popular newspapers, that have not yet found the way of making their literary page interesting, were to adopt it.

### *Men-of-all-work.*

TO almost every journal is attached a reviewer who is a man-of-all-work. It is his business to do the short reviews. He is understood to be able and willing to undertake any parcel of volumes that may be sent to him. His parcel may contain—will contain—all sorts and conditions of books, novels, treatises about Christian Science and Anglo-Israelitism,

school-books, editions of the classics, medical books, works on "The Secret of the Universe," and minor poems. He has to get notices of these into a column or two. This man-of-all-work is generally an intelligent person. He can see whether an author is obviously incompetent. He knows all about "and which" and the "split infinitive." He can tell by looking at the authorities quoted what class each volume belongs to. Above all things he knows where the ice is thin. He is exceedingly cautious in committing himself. As he is not usually well paid, he deals in extracts as much as possible.

*Setting the Style.*

NO doubt the difficulty of making a dense mass of reviews lively is very real and great. The only way in which it can be surmounted is by getting an editor who is so dominant that he can shoot his own personality through all, and make his contributors unconsciously write in his style. We have had eminent examples of this, especially in Mr. Hutton, whose reviews are so much missed in *The Spectator*.



### *III. MORALISINGS*

*I have known people who fled to work as an escape from great trouble, and no doubt it is much the best and safest escape. They have done wonders at such seasons, and have often risen above themselves in the quality of their work.*



## DIFFERENT AGES

### *Full Power.*

LAST night I asked an eminent authority on education about the zenith of a teacher's efficiency. This he placed without hesitation at between thirty-five and forty years. There is good authority for the view that a medical man is at his best from forty-five to fifty. However this may be, it frequently happens that the age when the teacher is more effective, when the preacher is most eloquent, when the physician is surest and keenest, comes at a time when their powers have received no proper recognition. To beat down difficulties, hindrances, prejudices, one must go on living and labouring. And so I am inclined to put the zenith of success—the time of most consideration and public labour—as somewhere in the sixties, say from sixty-five to seventy. At that time a man may be in full vigour, and yet be able to look back on a laborious and successful career. He is safe, or comparatively safe, in the position he has climbed to. Criticism dies down, people accept him as an institution, honours are conferred on him partly because he deserves them, and partly because it is felt that there should be no more postponement.

*After Fifty.*

AFTER fifty he may still hope to do some of his best work. It may be work for which he has been preparing unconsciously, or more probably it will be the realisation of plans already in his mind. After fifty there is no time to lose. Between fifty and sixty much should be accomplished—enough to justify the life.

## SUGGESTIONS

### *A Scottish Column.*

WHY has no London paper tried the experiment of one column of Scottish news every day ? There are Scotchmen enough in London to make the experiment a certain success.

### *A Statue.*

PRINCES STREET would look more homelike if one could meet Robert Louis Stevenson on emerging from the gloomy station.

### *A Brazen Man.*

WHY is there so little ingenuity shown nowadays in public clocks ? One is being inserted beside where I write, in the Town Hall at Eastbourne—a large, tasteless building—which is as plain as it can be. If a brazen man appeared every hour and struck the time with a hammer, an appreciable element of joy would be added to the life of every inhabitant. But we have lost imagination.

*If I were a Doctor.*

**I**F I were a medical man I think I should listen attentively to what patients say about themselves. I should do more than this, I should ask them questions about their symptoms.

On one occasion after illness I walked over to consult Sir Andrew Clark. He saw, I dare say, that I was extremely nervous, and I knew that he was the busiest of men. He said, "Do not hurry. Tell me everything, I want to hear it, I have plenty of time. I wish to go into your case thoroughly." The reassurance given by these words was indescribable. From that moment I gave my heart to Sir Andrew, and was his scrupulously obedient patient for five years, and found everything he said came true.

I have known doctors who in answer to questions about food would say, "Oh, it does not matter, anything you may prefer." If I were a doctor I should not answer in that way. I respectfully assure medical men that there are multitudes whose supreme desire is for a director.

If I were a doctor I should adopt a confident manner, a manner as confident as circumstances will permit; the doctor who hesitates is lost.

*Pensions for Poets.*

**I** WOULD suggest that a strong effort should be made to devote a larger sum to literary pensions. A great and rich nation like ours could very well afford to spend a few thousand a year in giving men of

poetical genius amongst us just enough to keep them and their children from starvation. The statesman will be wise and honoured who initiates such a movement, but in the meantime should not literary people themselves do something? Might not our wealthy dramatists and our comfortable novelists come out in this cause?

*Wanted for Schools.*

I PROCLAIM without ceasing that we want textbooks of literature and history which move the imagination of the young.

*An Institute of Counsel.*

I

I RECUR to my old idea of an Institute of Counsel. Somebody will take it up one of these days. If there were an institute under trustworthy management where everyone in distress could be told what he should do, I am persuaded that it would do more than almost anything else for the assuagement of human agony.

II

*My Conclusions are—*

THERE should be firms for giving advice on all practical subjects. These firms should be managed by men of unimpeachable probity; sagacious and experienced. They should have at their command the very best professional advice on every

subject. They should have agents all over the world, who can find out the facts they require.

The business done by these firms should be absolutely private.

In order to prevent an invasion of foolish and troublesome people, there should be a fee for the first interview. After that, if the case is taken up, an approximate estimate of cost should be given as soon as possible.

It is obvious that the firm should be at liberty to decline certain investigations.

In many cases their work will be accomplished when they hand over the inquirer to an expert professional man.

#### *Literary Guides.*

THE man I envy exists only hypothetically. If an English publisher were to commence the issue of a series of guide-books to the counties of Great Britain, in which should be found a full tracing of the literary associations of each, and if an editor were appointed, I should envy that man.

#### *Our Vagueness about America.*

IT beats me to understand why our London newspapers do not pay more attention to American affairs. Why should they not have at least every week one first-rate American letter signed in the manner of the New York papers?

## CERTAIN YOUNG MEN

### *Handwriting.*

I REMEMBER some years ago receiving a letter from a young man in which the signature occupied half a page of ordinary note-paper. I made up my mind that there was nothing for that young man but to wait and learn. Some years afterwards I received another letter from him. The signature was still too large, but not abnormally so. I was not surprised to hear that he was at last beginning to make good progress. When he becomes a really successful man no doubt his signature will be like the signatures of other people.

Another very trustworthy indication is the manner in which the pronoun "I" is written. On this I might say much, but I am afraid of personalities. Suffice it that wherever you have a person who writes the pronoun "I" just as he would write the great letter in the word "Irish," you may be tolerably sure of meeting a decent fellow. If, on the other hand, the "I" is contorted and queer, you are face to face with self-consciousness at the very least, and probably with something worse than that.

*The Reliable Hand.*

YOU have handwritings which tell you that in business matters the owner is to be relied on. If he says that he will deliver you a manuscript on Tuesday at twelve o'clock, you may be quite certain it will come, and that it will be decently done. Other handwritings suggest that you will get a letter on Tuesday at the appointed hour, explaining that the author is prostrate with neuralgia, and has not been able to do anything.

The people I like least in the world are the numerous class who believe that when anything is the matter with them they are at once absolved from every duty but that of attending to themselves. I have through many years been accustomed to judge questions of this sort merely on the indications of handwriting, and I have hardly ever found myself mistaken.

The ideal handwriting is the handwriting which shows the gentleman—not anxiously conciliatory, but still not willing to give offence.

*The Delay.*

ONCE upon a time a young man was on a visit to a country house. He had left the University after a distinguished career; but somehow he had failed to find his place in life, and was anxiously looking for a situation. He received a letter from London urging him to come up immediately as a position was vacant, an ideal position which he might probably obtain by personal application. The young man did



not go. He wrote that he would come up in two days. It turned out that he was too late, and he lost his chance. Everyone wondered at his procrastination, but by and by the mystery was explained. He had fallen in love with a girl, and intended to propose to her on the day when he should have gone to London. So you see the knowledge of one fact more explained everything.

## HINTS

*To the Author.*

I AM sure that if a convincing novel on Mary Queen of Scots is ever written it must be written after the manner of Scott. It must tell its story in incident, and not in reflection or in adjective.

*Urgent.*

AS a rule, letters marked "Urgent" are letters that need never be opened.

*Mere Shrewdness.*

MERE shrewdness is among the stupidest and most hateful things in the world. There is nothing with which men are so soon satiated.

*Quiet Content.*

IT is always pleasant to meet with a contented man, if he is not too anxious to give his reasons for contentment.

*The Danger of the Dream.*

THE compiler is always with us, but the researcher is very rare, and promises to be rarer. It is he who should make haste and take account of the years, and see that his long labour is not fruitless.

*Learning by Heart.*

EVERYBODY should be able to repeat at least twenty good poems and many little stanzas besides. In order to keep them you must be continually repeating them. There is no better way of passing a dull journey in a train than in going over poems. I think it is even a better thing to learn some fine passage of prose. If you can let them remain in your minds, they will give you some idea of what can be done with words. If you repeat a passage of some great writer of English, like De Quincey, or Charlotte Brontë, in an underground train or on any tiresome journey, you will generally find that you are not sure of some words, and you guess them. When you come home, look up the passage and see how much better, how inevitable is the word that the writer actually used. It is a humbling, but a very salutary experience.

*Weak in Memory.*

I SHOULD say to all persons notably weak in memory : Read nothing but one newspaper and one good book at a time. By keeping something you will gradually become interested in keeping more. It is like saving. When young people have accumu-

lated their first pound and put it into the bank, there is little fear. They will go on adding to the nucleus, and will probably die well off. It is a comfortable experience, no doubt, to become richer in money each year, but most of us find that it is not within our power. It is, however, within our power to become richer mentally every day and every year, and that is a far better thing.

*Keeping Detached.*

IT may be true that a touch of indifference is the safest foundation on which to build a lasting and delicate friendship.

*A Hint to the Publisher's Reader.*

I BELIEVE in the popularity of what I may call the magic-carpet book. But that I mean the book that carries you away out of your own environment, out of your toil, out of yourself, which transports you in a moment as by Arabian magic into a new scene. Books that do this are almost certain to have considerable literary merit. They can only be written by those who live very intensely in the world they picture, and among the people they describe. Of all writers, I think Scott and Dumas possessed this power in the highest degree. It is a great and enviable gift. I think it cannot exist in full measure without a considerable power of story-telling. It is the kind of talent which keeps one up at night, which makes a man impatient when the dinner-bell rings. The

publisher's reader has not an easy task in these days. He has not many stars by which to steer, but he may be quite sure that if he sits up to finish one of his typewritten novels he may safely recommend his employers to publish the book, and to pay the author handsomely.

*Fifty-two a Year.*

ONE might say truly that anyone who would read one book a week for two years would do very well.

## GETTING ON

### *The Thing to be Feared.*

THE great barrier to success in life is irregularity.

### *The Unmentionable Words.*

THE words that have done more harm than any others are "This will do." Young men who want to get on must never use them. They must always be able to say, "This is the best I could do." Next to them in mischief is the horrible phrase "Oh, I forgot." The misery, the anger, the disappointment, the loss caused by forgetting, is unspeakable. You have no right to forget. If you cannot remember, you must keep a notebook. Mark in it every promise you make, and examine it from time to time. Again, when you undertake to do a thing, you must find ways of doing it. Who of us does not know the young man who was told to do such-and-such a thing, and comes back at the end of the day with a variety of excellent reasons for failing to do it? So the day is wasted, the chance is lost. What you have got to do is to manage the thing somehow. A man goes to get some information about another man, and informs you, after a reasonable delay, that he took the journey

and found the man out—as if it had not been his business to run the man to earth somehow ! I have got two copies of an excellent little pamphlet, entitled *A Message to Garcia*, issued by Smith's Printing and Publishing Agency. Every word of it is according to my own heart, and if I could I would put a copy into the hands of every young man in London.

Briefly, the story is this : When war broke out between Spain and the United States it was very necessary to communicate with Garcia, the leader of the insurgents, who was somewhere in the mountain fastnesses of Cuba. No mail or telegraph message could reach him. Nobody knew exactly where he was, and yet he had to be found. Someone said to the President : "There's a fellow by the name of Rowan will find Garcia for you, if anybody can." Rowan was sent for, and got the letter, started off at once, landed by night off the coast of Cuba from an open boat, disappeared into the jungle, and in three weeks came out on the other side of the island, having traversed a hostile country on foot, and delivered his letter to Garcia. McKinley gave Rowan a letter to be delivered to Garcia. Rowan took the letter, and did not ask : "Where is he at ?" Now that is a man whose form should be cast in bronze, and the statue placed in every college of the land.

*The Young Fool.*

THE very best and kindest way of treating a young fool is to fling him on the street. The contact with the pavement will waken him up when

nothing else will. The boundless conceit and laziness of many young men in our day requires a treatment no less drastic than this. I am of opinion, besides, that if able-bodied people are to be maintained in workhouses, they should be compelled to earn their living. That the honest, hard-working taxpayer should have to provide money for the support of lazy louts is a monstrous thing. There is a great deal of mawkish sentimentalism about ; but the sternness of life is a primary fact, and cannot be evaded.

*Imbecile or Scoundrel ?*

IF a man is really an imbecile it is the duty of the State to take care of him. If, on the other hand, he has abilities and will not use them, he is a scoundrel, and ought to be punished. I think that is good Christianity. There was a certain teacher of old time who said that, if men would not work, neither should they eat. That is precisely my doctrine.

*The Average Type.*

YOU are sitting in your office with six clerks within call. Summon any one, and make this request : " Please look in the encyclopædia, and make a brief memorandum for me concerning the life of Correggio." Will the clerk quietly say, " Yes, sir," and go and do the task ? Certainly not. He will look at you out of a fishy eye, and ask one or more of the following questions : " Who was he ? Which



encyclopædia? Where is the encyclopædia? Was I hired for that? Don't you mean Bismarck? Why should not Charlie do it? Is he dead? Is there any hurry? Shan't I bring you the book and let you look it up yourself?" He will go off at last, and get another clerk to help him, and then come back and report that there is no such man mentioned in the encyclopædia, and it will turn out when you inquire that he has looked for Correggio under the letter "K."

Yes, that is the true picture of the average type of man as I have found him.

*A Word about the Masters.*

I CONSIDER that many employers are just as incompetent, lazy, stupid, and self-indulgent as the worst workman can be. They take no real pains, they do not keep a vigilant eye upon the details of their business, they neither recognise the good workman nor punish the bad workman. They are continually forgetting and muddling; they hate to be told that they are living in a new world and under new conditions, and they fondly imagine that what might have passed in periods comparatively stagnant will pass now. If the commercial prosperity of this country is lost it will be quite as much the fault of employers as the fault of employees, and in both cases it will be a moral fault.

*One and One make Five.*

IT is the combination of qualities rather than their singularity which gives attraction and influence. One and one in this region do not make two ; they make five. Respectable gifts used with ceaseless industry will do far more to make life efficient and happy than brilliant gifts where there is no industry.

*Expansion.*

MOST of us come late in life to the discovery that we can do much more than we are doing.

*That Glance at the Clock.*

IF every man was made to know that he held his position simply so long as he filled it efficiently, there would be a great quickening everywhere. As it is, many men become duffers at forty. And there is too much to be said for the idea that youth is the qualification for success. But, as a matter of fact, it is not so. It is of no importance whether a man's hair is white or black, whether he was born in the fifties or the sixties or the seventies. What is important is that he should be efficient.

It is long ago since one of the first men in the City of London said to me that he regarded no firm as safe if the partners were all over forty years of age, and I fully believe he was right. By the end of this century there will be no such things as appointments for life. People will keep their places just as long as they deserve to keep them, and not a minute longer.

*Rabbits.*

OUR businesses are thronged with mediocrities. A business man, when a mediocrity is introduced to him, can scarcely ever do anything for him. Nor is mere ability enough. Though a brain fertile in practical ideas is very rare and very valuable, there must be the power of patient, constant, watchful toil to realise those ideas. The young man who insists upon regular meals, whatever happens, and who during the last hour of his days is always looking at the clock, and who likes an afternoon off to see a cricket match at Lord's, is of no use in these days. He is as common as the rabbit in Australia—or is it in New Zealand?—and nearly as great a nuisance. But for those who have the qualifications and are willing to use them, for those who are daunted by no toil, and no difficulty, for those who give themselves without reserve to the work they have in hand, there is always abundance of room.

*Fruitful Discussion.*

SOME employers in this country think that talking over things is a mere waste of time. They say that they prefer acting to talking. In my humble opinion no time is so well spent as the time spent in discussing business with capable and friendly helpers.

*And yet.*

THE busiest man ought to be able to spend part of the day alone, frequently without doing anything.

*Furiously to Think.*

COMPARATIVELY few people are teachable. Even in the hard school of experience they do not learn. This is partly due to pride, but I often think that it is even more due to laziness. You get into a certain groove, a certain way of doing things, and at last you find that any change is very irksome. So though things are not going well, you continue in that way, and things never come right. I say that the fact of failure should always make us pause.

*Paying the Price.*

DOES it not frequently happen that work only begins to tell when it is carried on to the point of sacrifice? This may be because of the struggle for existence. I can conceive a student determining to work a few hours a day, giving the rest to recreation. But if he fixes on three hours, let us say, he will find that someone of equal or superior gifts is working six hours, and will certainly come in before him. That, however, is a superficial explanation. I cannot, after much reflection, explain the fact, but the fact is there. It is a vital truth that work carried beyond the boundary of the natural strength is the work that makes its mark in the world. A man has made no mark, and asks himself why. It is because he has not paid the price of making his mark.

*Rare Cases.*

A FEW people fail because they are too busy ; in other words, because they try to do too much.

*Interruptions.*

I THINK it may be said as a general rule that the work of your life, the work to which you have given yourself, must be done and done as well as you can do it. That is the main thing. This is the way in which one may best serve humanity. If a clergyman is expected to preach regularly, he must mind his pulpit first. It is no excuse for a badly prepared sermon to say that he was busy through the week attending this meeting and that. This means simply that he was too busy to do his duty. The journalist must not neglect his work in order to deliver harangues. The student must at all cost keep his hours. He must not allow his morning to be broken up ; he must not suffer the distractions of life to get in the way. The days are passing, and the weeks and the months and the years. Life shrinks and dwindles into a narrow compass. It is high time to be doing something on a regular plan in a settled way. Otherwise in a multitude of trifles the golden opportunity slips. In other words, concentration is necessary, and interruptions must be ended at any cost. If not, everything we do will be blurred and stained by error, shortcoming, and slovenliness.

*The Over-worked.*

IS it true that over-worked men are less happy, less healthy, and shorter-lived than others? I do not believe it. Let anyone think over the list of his

friends. There are three or four of my friends who might fairly be described as work-drunken. They are always busy and always ready to take on more work. Two of them are not physically robust, but, save at times of immense pressure, they are the most cheerful and gentle men I know. They never brood, they are generally hopeful; they have little relaxation, but what they have is relished with an intensity of joy. They are the people who keep young in the true sense of the word. They have the spirit that secures the happiness because it does not shrink from the unhappiness of working days. They have their times of full sunshine given to happy memories, happy experiences, and happy hopes. I think of others who are under-worked, and I will not say that I have not sometimes envied them their leisure, but I have never envied them long, nor have I ever felt that the envy was rational.

*To the Quick-witted.*

DO not forget that special temptations assail the quick-witted. They are, for one thing, apt to be very impatient with those of slower pace and shorter breath. The quickest among you will find that to do your life work well you must consort for the most part with average creatures, men who cannot be hurried beyond a certain point, men who lose heart and nerve if they are urged beyond their natural speed. Also it has often been noted that the quality of swift intelligence may be accompanied by a certain

shirking of work. There will be much work for you in the nature of excavation. You will have to get through to the darker and rockier depths of subject, and in this process you will find that during long intervals your quickness will not help you very much. You will have to rely simply on slow toil, of which the best cannot be hastened. Therefore, let the swift-witted remember that their dangers are impatience and superficiality.

*A Gracious Way.*

THERE is no reason why charm of manner should not be added to any gift, physical or intellectual.

*"Trustable."*

I LOVE the people who make notes of every engagement, who, if they are in doubt, take care to verify—the people to whom you can leave anything which they have once undertaken with perfect peace of mind. But the majority, even when they have promised to do a thing, leave you still anxious. It is still a weight on you. You do not know whether it is going to be done or not. They are very amiable, and they mean the very best, but they cannot be trusted. Trustworthiness is the foundation of everything.

*Living with Oneself.*

I SHOULD be inclined to say that even a very slight self-complacency is not a bad thing. It is just as well that a man should think more highly of his

house, of the view from his window, of his own sanctum, than his visitors do. It helps to make him content, cheerful, benignant. I do not admire parents who are unable to perceive special virtues and merits in their own children. After all, one has to live with oneself.

*What Punctuality means.*

YOU generally find that the punctual person is at all times the trustworthy person. People would try harder for trustworthiness if they knew how lovable a quality it is. When you know you can rely upon anyone, that whatever they undertake to do will be done, that you can really pass over a share of your load to them, you cannot help liking them.

*Friendliness.*

MY view is that no one is really popular who is not in some degree genial and communicative.

*The Successful Friend.*

YOU meet your friend after his triumph, and he does not cut you. In fact he is quite willing to converse with you, but there is an unwonted majesty in his accent, a weight of responsibility on his brow, a high dignity in his manner, an oracular and even Orphic style in his utterance, and generally a very



strong reminder that the relations between him and you cannot be what they once were. You may be invited to his house, but if so you must sleep in a garret.

Very likely you will note about this time that your old correspondent has altered the form of his signature. The letters of his name are larger, and there are more twirls and flourishes.

## TALK

*With Francis Espinasse.*

I NEVER heard him talk without wonder and delight. In comparison with him every other London bookman seemed a mere babe. He had done nothing but read and write.

*The House of Delight.*

A COTTAGE with a garden and a high wall I name the House of Good Talk. It was so once upon a time, when it was inhabited by an editor who was both scholar and gentleman. He has been dead many years. He was a bachelor, always cheerful, and eminently social, though he had enough to depress him. He suffered from the double drain of a wasting lung and an expensive weekly paper. The journal he established himself, and carried through deep waters to the appearance but not the reality of success. This editor, indeed, fancied that he had achieved a great triumph when he brought the loss down to £40 a week. No man I ever knew more intensely enjoyed good talk. Let it be observed that I say good talk, and not a good talk. Dr. Johnson never could have said "Sir, we had a good talk." Nobody spoke in that manner in the eighteenth century. What he said was, "Sir, we had good talk," though

Robert Louis Stevenson could not be made to understand the distinction. Well, the talk at this editor's house was extraordinarily good. Generally speaking, I have found the most pleasant conversation to be dialogue, but our host had a personality so vivid and sympathetic that he brought everybody in. No doubt he selected. He liked young men best, and he chose companions who had common interests. So it turned out inevitably that the talk was shoppy, but I like shoppy talk provided it is my shop, as in this case it happened to be. On a summer day we would gather in the garden, and you might then hear the news you were most interested in, along with plenty of brilliant but not ill-natured comment. Our host was very particular to exclude bitterness and scandal. He was equally scrupulous in his abhorrence of flattery. That detestable individual, the Second Fiddle, was never allowed to play in his presence. It is long ago now, but it was a great honour and privilege for me to have some share of the talk in those days, and I sometimes stop at the gate and look through, and see the little lawn peopled by kind ghosts.

*The Talk of Humorists.*

I HAVE heard few people more wearisome in talk than some really great humorists.

*Public Speaking.*

I FEEL inclined to preach to Parliamentarians, to ecclesiastics, to after-dinner speakers, and the rest, that they should view the power of speaking as a

great power and cultivate it resolutely in so far as they possess it. In the times that are to come men will listen only to great voices.

*The After-dinner Variety.*

HOW dreadful and dismaying is the average after-dinner speech! I have heard several distinguished and brilliant men make such exhibitions of themselves in these speeches that I never can associate their names with success of any kind. This is generally due to the complete lack of taking pains.

*Excellent Dialogue.*

I SUPPOSE the finest conversation in the world is to be found in George Eliot's novels (Boswell's *Johnson* is practically monologue). There the vigour is rapid, clinching, unfaltering—the ball is driven ringingly from one side to another, and you think it will never fall.

*The Talker's Writing.*

I KNOW just one case of a highly educated person writing a thoroughly uneducated hand, and I have no doubt there is some explanation for it. She is a highly cultured lady, and brilliant in conversation. Her style, however, when she writes, is poor and uncoloured, and her handwriting resembles that which I have seen come from workhouses. Allowing for this exception, I have never been deceived.

*Only Three Brilliant.*

**B**RILLIANCY, it need hardly be said, is very rare, as rare at least as the most precious jewels. In the whole course of my pilgrimage, I have met with perhaps three persons who might be called brilliant in conversation, who in any room and in any company would soon draw all eyes and ears. That is a small number out of so many, many highly and variously gifted.

All brilliancy is not hard. There is a certain form of brilliance which draws out in a wonderful way everything that is best in others. Some brilliant talkers coruscate and coruscate, and care for nothing but the responsive look and murmur of admiration. There are others, not less gifted than they, who listen as well as speak, who can take an ordinary remark and light it at the fire of their own bright spirits, and give it back to the astonished speaker irradiated and glorious. That is, indeed, a celestial talent, and there are few finer experiences that come to most of us dull people than to have come, whether it be once or twice in a lifetime, within its friendly play.

Let another Milton rise, just as eloquent as the old Milton, and we shall listen spellbound with delight and awe to his music. We are very tired, it may be allowed, of little Macaulays ; but if Macaulay were to come back again, we should rush for his books as greedily as our fathers did. We knew very well when Ruskin departed that there was much that went with him, and that precious secrets were buried in his

grave. The brilliant writer, the brilliant talker, the brilliant speaker—all of them are needed in our day more than they ever were, and will not fail of joyous welcome and full reward.

*The Old Friend.*

CONVERSATION, even between the most intimate, ought to be carefully prepared for—that is, each should reflect previously over what he is going to say to his friend, each should think over the probable experiences and circumstances of his friend.

*On Remembering Good Talk.*

NOTHING is more astonishing than to come across people who have been in the habitual society of the greatest minds and who can tell you absolutely nothing. I found in a recent book a list of celebrities at a dinner party. Then comes : “ And wasn’t their talk worth hearing ? You may imagine.” Just so.

*Some Fruits of Experience.*

THE most brilliant conversationalists I have heard could do nothing in writing ; and many who show a distinct literary gift in letters, lose it at once and become commonplace and stilted when they essay writing for the press.

*Tact.*

**I**N the ordinary, as well as in the extraordinary, way of life, the faculty of diversion is invaluable. It is often particularly useful in conversation. I have heard of a great business man, who, when things became unpleasant in a discussion, had a trick of pulling out a drawer. In this drawer he kept some rare and curious objects. He would select one and show it, and the talk speedily became amicable.

## HOLIDAYS

### *Rules.*

ONE should never be awakened on a holiday. Nobody should ever dream of starting by any train before eleven o'clock in the morning. Nobody should take a watch with him on his holidays. He should as far as possible experience the timeless state. If he wants to go anywhere he should, when the impulse seizes him, ask a waiter when the next train starts for his place, and take it if it is suitable, and wait till next day if it is not. A good plan, which I have tried more than once with eminent success, is simply, when you feel disposed, to drive to the station and wait until there is a train for the place you want to go to.

### *The Mood.*

MY first impressions of France were derived from that excellent book *A Cruise upon Wheels*, by Charles Alston Collins, the son-in-law of Dickens. It is in some respects as good a book of travels as was ever written, admirable in literary quality, and full throughout of that strong tranquillity in which the journey of life is best accomplished. It is he, if I remember rightly, who warns holiday-makers not to try to "take it out" of the landscape. Some people



no sooner start than they are gazing fiercely out of the carriage window at every little hedge and brook, as if determined to extract its secret. Rather let the humours of the mind lie at rest ; let the mind gradually take in the resemblances and differences of the scene, and it will soon become possessed of something which is not the less precious because it cannot easily be described.

*The Happy State.*

YOU have a right to do nothing. You smile at the imperial prig who complained that he had lost a day, and try to lose as many days as you possibly can.

*Prescription for One Tired of Pleasing.*

MR. HAMERTON thinks that the sensation of being alone in a small town is simply unbearable. We cannot agree ; we have never been happier than when alone in small towns. Let a man be fairly exhausted by keeping engagements, delivering addresses, writing letters, and trying to please everyone, and we can prescribe for him. Make your way to a place where you have never been before. Then let your watch stop. Go down to breakfast when you please, go out and come in as suits you, and never look at time-tables, (this is essential). When you want to go somewhere else, go down to the station, and wait till there is a train. Keep silent as far as possible. This will be easy if you have that strange but very

common knowledge of foreign languages which consists in your not being able to speak or understand the simplest sentence of them, although you can read them with the utmost facility. We once spent five weeks in this way. For four weeks we were almost quite silent, but the fifth week, in a lonely village in the Hartz Mountains, where better things might have been expected, we met with a lively old Scotsman, who talked an hour every morning about Lotze's metaphysics, and an hour every evening about Sanskrit.



#### *IV. MEMORIES AND OPINIONS*

*For true happiness there must be a deep and abiding  
reconciliation with circumstance.*

## POLITICS AND POLITICIANS

### *A Short Story.*

I SEEM to understand better than I did the hostility of Socialism to Liberalism. Liberalism aims at a more equal division of goods, but in proportion as men become possessors, in that proportion they will show their teeth to anyone who tries to dispossess them. The pith of the matter is in a little story. Two working-men were discussing Socialism—one a Socialist, the other doubtful. Said the doubtful: "If you had two horses, would you give me one?" "Yes, I would," said the Socialist. "If you had two cows, would you give me one?" "Yes," was the reply. "If you had two pigs, would you give me one?" "Come, Bill, you know I have two pigs." If the classes desire to arrest Socialism they will be wise to make an end on their own lines of the anomalies that exist.

### *Political Power.*

IT has long been my conviction that the people of this country are not to be pitied. They are to be challenged. For the ills under which they groan are very largely ills which they have the power to cure or to throw off.

*Nervous or Anxious.*

“**N**OBODY is intimidated.” That is the secret of American life and growth. Here we are nearly all of us intimidated. I see nothing for us but to utilise to the utmost the capital of our nation. That capital is the brain of the country—wherever it exists. It must be found out ; made to do its work.

*Parnell.*

**S**O ends the most romantic career since Prince Charlie’s—deeply shadowed, yet not without great hours of light, and achievements which, if they cannot redeem the failures and the frailties, will yet secure for Parnell an impregnable place in the passionate Irish heart—will link his name with song and story when poverty and romance are things of the past—and create a popular idol before which the greatest and the dearest will be no more than common clay.

*W. F. Bryan.*

**T**HE lower part of his face strongly reminds one of the late Dr. Parker. The oratorical lines are very plainly marked. Mr. Bryan, however, has a smaller head and much less mannerism. He has a natural and inviolable dignity, but he is not self-conscious ; he has no pose, but listens courteously and readily, and he replies with the utmost frankness and simplicity. He impresses one as a man conversant

with great affairs, accustomed to handle crowds, strong, reposeful, and tenacious, but I may say that what struck one most was the gentleness with which Mr. Bryan spoke of everyone. There is not a particle in him of the soured and baffled leader.

*Colonel Harvey, American Ambassador.*

HE did not conceal the fact that his early years marked a period of great struggle and difficulty. I remember him once looking round the magnificent hotel where he was staying and saying in a reminiscent way : " I am taking revenge upon my youth."

*An Open Letter to Andrew Carnegie.*

I

YOU have the power to kindle in the humblest home of your native country a light that will fall on each child that is laid in the cradle.

II

THE objections to free university education cannot, I think, have much impressed you. The chief is that what is free is not valued. But nature and health and love and salvation are free, and you know that all of them have been prized, and very deeply prized.



*Lloyd George.*

HE has taken rank as one of the greatest men in the world. His ambition has always been to serve his country and to save the poor. This has been the very marrow and essence of his mind. It has been stimulated by every dream of his imagination, and ratified by every dictate of his conscience.

## EXPLORERS

*H. M. Stanley, the Thinker.*

STANLEY'S powerful face impressed me as the most melancholy I had ever gazed on. At a small literary club in London, where jests were in the air, and the atmosphere was easy and joyous, Stanley sat a man apart, as if brooding on some wrong that never in time or eternity could be set right.

*Ernest Shackleton, Celt.*

HE was a born speaker, and a born leader of men. With perfect self-possession, with easy command of himself and his audience, with an ample choice of fitting language, and with a rare modesty, he summed up the lessons of the expedition. Hunger was the chief enemy, and I have never heard the horrors of hunger more stoically and yet more impressively described. Very touching also was Mr. Shackleton's modest but firm utterance as to the belief of himself and his companions in the guidance and guardianship of the Supreme Power. He held it a religious duty to make this known.

Lieutenant Shackleton was not the man I expected to see. He was a Celt, with eyes full of fire and sadness, with many tuneful modulations in his voice, resolute and wistful.

## WARS

*Lord Roberts sails for Home.*

THE events which young and old are now eagerly expecting is the return of our General from South Africa. He comes back with his task gloriously accomplished, and ready for the new tasks of to-morrow. Like the saintly vicar in *John Inglesant* he is "full of cares and full of years ; of neither weary, but full of hope and of heaven." The crowds who see him pass along the streets of London will be lost in a dream of wonder and devotion like Lavaine when he first looked at Lancelot.

*With Lloyd George on a Lucky Day.*

I HAD the honour of spending one of the most happy days in the war at Mr. Lloyd George's house near Brighton. The talk drifted, and the Premier gave illustrations from Scottish history of what had taken place in the Great War. I discovered very soon that his knowledge of the Covenanters and Prince Charlie was far fuller than mine. This is not saying much, but I have read a good deal on both of these subjects.

*The Scottish Love for their Authors.*

DO we love Milton? Perhaps Macaulay loved him. Do we love Dryden, or Pope, or Wordsworth, or Coleridge, or Southey? I am not sure that we do.

Take the possessions of the Scots. Take Burns, Scott, Carlyle, and R. L. Stevenson. Apart from the splendour of their achievement, do we not love them? As for Burns, there is no gainsaying. "We love Burns and we pity him," said Carlyle long ago. That is not the full expression of Scottish feeling. The name of Burns is not so much written as it is ploughed on the inner heart of the Scottish people.

And we love Scott. It is true that he set himself against the prevailing political sentiment of his countrymen, and this he did openly and passionately. But though Scott was a Tory by heart and head, he was a true friend and lover of the poor. He spoke to every man as if he were his blood relation.

*A Book about Aberdeenshire.*

FOR years I have cherished the hope of writing a book about Aberdeenshire in the nineteenth century, and it is with reluctance and with the hope that someone else will take up the task that I have abandoned this purpose. Such a book should be full of interest, and it should be written soon, for the material is slowly disappearing. A great deal has been published in

books and newspapers, but the traditions are the best part, and they are perishing. What I should like to see is a miscellaneous book, giving an account of the way in which people spend their time, of the orderly progress of the months and years. It should tell how the inhabitants earned their incomes and how they spent them. It should tell how they passed the long winter evenings; it should tell how their thoughts were moulded, and this means that very great attention should be given to the ministers and to the schoolmasters. But the ministers of Aberdeenshire had during the last century a place of power, and when the schoolmaster was worthy, as he often was, his influence was scarcely second to theirs. Men like Minto of Clatt, are still vividly and gratefully remembered, and they deserve all the honour they can receive. But the impression of such is rapidly fading, and it will soon be out of anyone's power to recover it. There should be gathered also, recollections of the agriculturists. Many of them were conspicuous figures, hard-headed, emphatic, and resolute men. There should be a good deal to say of the relations between the city and the shire. A chapter should be devoted to the poets, of whom we had not a few. Above all, the characters who abounded should be recalled. If the story is written rightly it will contain many anecdotes. In the series of articles which J. A. contributed to the *Huntly Express*, and which, alas, remain uncompleted, an excellent beginning was made. In fact, this is one of the best contributions ever supplied to the understanding of Aberdeenshire.

*Lumsden Village.*

THE old thatched houses are grey and comfortless. Long labour and brief rest have divided life between them, leaving no space for hobbies and luxuries and decorations. Still, when all this is allowed for, Lumsden has its own severe and majestic beauty. There is nothing in Surrey comparable with the solemn hills that circle in and guard the remote northern village. George Macdonald has caught with a poet's insight the romantic aspects of the place. Many a night I had watched the moon shining down on the hills and the valley without being able to put in words the look she wore then—a look I could not see in other places. In his last book, *Heather and Snow*, a story of the parish, Dr. Macdonald has given it in final form. He speaks of her “strange, wasted beauty,” and that is exactly what I felt and could not say. It is not the same anywhere else.

*At Aberdeen University.*

AT that time the distance between a student and a professor was at least equal to that between Liverpool and New York. Talk of a gulf? I have known two trembling little Bajans (first-year students) encounter a professor in King Street, and doff their bonnets, while the great man regarded them with a stony stare, and made no sign. I never heard of a student dining with a professor in my days. In London, where, when you hear of a professor, you

immediately think of a chiropodist or a pill-maker, you can never understand what a professor was in Aberdeen.

*Aberdonians, Simple and Complex.*

WE have very many who have Celtic blood in their veins, and they are much better for that admixture. Then we have what may be termed the pure Aberdonian type, which has in it very little of romance and poetry, as these are conventionally known. The place is well supplied, however, by a certain steadfastness and trustworthiness and power to thole which have made a way for the Aberdeenshire people all over the world. The country, as I first knew it, was one great school of stoicism.

*The Scottish Talent.*

THEY can admire John Knox and Mary Queen of Scots . . . a feat impossible to other nations.

## PEN PORTRAITS

*George R. Sims.*

WE took to lunching at the club on Fridays and there we always had a talk. I learned a great deal from his conversation, and came to the conclusion, from which I have never swerved for a moment, that he was both a good and gifted man.

The next thing that struck me about George Sims was his resolute determination not to speak ill of any-one. He made foes and they sometimes persecuted him mercilessly. I never heard him say anything against anybody in their private capacity. He was sensitive, and shrank from personal controversy. When I was reading his *Mustard and Cress* every week I noticed the meticulous care not to give offence.

He had a great love for the Jews, though he refused to admit that he had Jewish blood. He kindly took me up to the Jewish quarter for a day's investigation, and I had good occasion to mark how the heads of Jewry liked him and respected him. He was a most versatile and active man, and did a good deal for his fellow-beings. That is all the praise he would have claimed, for his modesty was a thing of the heart, and quite impregnable in his later days.



*Augustus Hare.*

MR. HARE was an old man when he died, but he hated the appearance of age, and it was generally thought that he looked young. He thought so himself, but I am not so sure. He had a singularly artificial look. His literary ability was real and very considerable. He had the power of selection, a genuine interest in literary associations and in human character, and a true gratitude for those who befriended him. Mr. Hare was in the habit of talking about himself as a poor man, but I never knew how to interpret that. His beautiful home suggested nothing of the kind. His relations with editors and publishers were much troubled, but I think he knew how to take care of himself. Once I asked him to give some chapters of his then unpublished autobiography for use in a magazine. He asked what price I was willing to give. I asked him what he wanted. He replied by saying that his regular price was ten pounds for a thousand words. As I knew very well that he had often taken much less, I respectfully refused, and cut the discussion short. Some may remember that he made an attack on Mr. Murray for paying him inadequately for certain guide books. Mr. Murray made a crushing reply in the *Athenæum*, giving figures which showed that he had had a heavy loss on the books. We ought not to pass from Augustus Hare without remembering that we owe him much, not only for the entertainment he has given us, but for the high and religious tone of all he wrote. Though all his life associated

with religious people, and in much sympathy with religious ideas, he was himself, I think, at heart an agnostic. Those who read his autobiography will form their own opinions on this.

*Oliver Wendell Holmes.*

MR. OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES died on Sunday. He had reached the great age of eighty-five, and had retained to the end a wonderful degree of mental and bodily vigour. With him has departed the last survivor of the great American men of letters—men as remarkable for the dignity and charm of their characters as for the distinctiveness of their genius. Holmes was, to begin with, an aristocrat to the finger-tips—an aristocrat, it is true, of the Boston and not of the British or French type, but no less an aristocrat for that. He was first a man of breeding, then a poet and a wit, then a doctor of medicine. His books, from *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table* downwards—we do not say that the descent is sharp or deep—are in every word the work of a gentleman. He had a very pretty talent in poetry and a brilliant turn for epigram. His profession as a doctor strengthened his literary work in many ways, and did not weaken it in any, unless, perhaps, we should except *Elsie Venner*. The experience which his work brings to the physician who is a cultured gentleman makes a very attractive combination, and it perhaps was never realised so well as in Holmes. His familiarity with the sad secrets of mortality never made him cruel or coarse. It seemed rather to quicken his keen

sympathy and his large and compassionate tenderness. Readers of his books do not need to be reminded of the passages which prove this.

Holmes, like his contemporaries, was interested in theology and passed, we believe, from Congregationalism to Unitarianism. He was revolted by harsh doctrines of future punishment, and kept up a long and vehement protest against them. But he was not in the least a philosopher or a mystic. His little book on Emerson proves this only too well. One of the few gifts Holmes lacked was that of biographer, for his life of Motley is also a deeply disappointing book. Brighter even than his literary fame will be the memory of his clean, honest, diligent, kindly life, lived fearlessly in the daylight, with a welcome for all comers.

*P. G. Hamerton.*

SUCH healing as he knew he imparted freely. One of his great thoughts was how much more vivid life is to some than others. He longed to see it made vivid to all. He would fain open the delights of nature, of art, of literature to the whole world. Another ruling conviction of his was that most of the misery in the world is due to misunderstanding—perverse, stupid, obstinate misunderstanding. Thus he did what he could—and it was very much—as an interpreter. He vehemently desired to see Frenchmen understanding Englishmen, and Englishmen understanding Frenchmen. On the subject of marriage he wrote at length and seriously, insisting on the

necessity of companionship in the fullest sense between husband and wife. His aim was ever at the highest view of things—the view which is just and wise because it is generous. Much sorrow and disaster would doubtless be avoided if his counsel were followed, but much would remain. As to that, he could only preach the duty of making the most of life by making the most of one's self, by forgetting personal grief in order to pass with healing influence into the larger pain of the world. He taught that lesson well. There was about him, to quote Miss Thackeray's felicitous essay on Jane Austen, "a certain gentle hardness of heart." It helped him to speak for the most part quietly and without bitterness of whatever happened.

*Theodore Roosevelt.*

MY first meeting with Mr. Roosevelt dates so far back that I may now venture to recall it in print. It was in a room of a small club in New York. Our host was a well-known artist who had brought together a company of eight men. Mr. Roosevelt was even at that time a marked personality. He had behind him the record of adventures in cowboy land ; he had taken a distinct place as a politician, and he was President of the Police Commission of New York. It was evident that he had done much good in reforming the force, in recognising gallantry, and in keeping politics and corruption out of the promotions. He was particularly anxious to reward men for deeds of heroism, and to organise an effective antagonism to the baser and more violent of the criminal classes.

That evening Mr. Roosevelt took a lead in the conversation, and his anecdotes were admirably told. But another gentleman of the party, who had been making a very liberal use of his opportunities, turned at last on the future President. He had enough sense left to speak his mind, and not enough to restrain himself. In clear tones he gave the embarrassed company what was evidently a full, true, and particular account of what he really thought about Mr. Roosevelt. I need not recall his pronouncement, save to say it lacked nothing in lucidity. We none of us knew what to say or how to intervene, but Mr. Roosevelt proved admirably equal to the difficult situation. The way in which he behaved himself, so masterly, so kind, so friendly, was a thing to remember all one's days. In a very short time he succeeded in completely disarming the enemy, and picked up the thread of talk as if nothing had happened. The remaining part of the evening went as well as possible. The culprit recovered himself and seemed to have no memory of his indiscretion. We were only too glad that it should be buried, and from that evening to this day I have known that Theodore Roosevelt was a true gentleman.

*William Barnes.*

ONE of the white days of my life—white as Dominie Sampson's encounter with Pleydell—was spent with the venerable poet in his thatched rectory of Winterbourne Came, near Dorchester. It is only a mile or so distant, and there is a charming

path through fields. I had been long enough in old Dorchester to see its Roman Camp and the gentle undulations of green Dorsetshire—beautiful even after a journey from Lynton, through Exmoor and the valley of the Doones. Imagine the rectory “a cosy little nest”—a thatched cottage with wide eaves and wider verandah, on whose rustic pillars roses, clematis, and honeysuckle entwine. Imagine in front of this the venerable and picturesque figure of the poet, clad in antique costume and bearing himself with old-fashioned dignity and courtesy. In the little drawing-room everything spoke of simple refinement, the chief ornaments being the much-coveted Tennysons printed at the private press of Ivor Bertie Guest.

It was with keen pleasure (forgive me) that I saw on the table a little volume in which I had a hand. The poet plunged into delightful and copious talk, discussing frankly his own poems and those of his contemporaries. It would not be right to print all he said, but one or two things may be mentioned. He spoke with enthusiastic admiration of Ossian, and quoted some of his favourite passages. Burns and Wordsworth he also spoke of as his masters, and Tennyson, one of his own ardent admirers, he emphatically pronounced the greatest of living poets. Of his own poems, he thought “The Wife a-lost” the best.

#### *The Poems.*

THE “Life” is good, but his “Poems” are much better. I do not know ten books from which I have had more good. The dialect is as easy

as possible, and is the fitting garb for the songs. The "Poems" take account of everything pure, beautiful, refreshing, homely, and tender in peasant life, and leave the rest unnamed. To a generation that needs the return to nature they are a veritable gospel. For Nature with Barnes includes man as God made him, but not as the devil spoiled him. "The Spring," "The Woodlands," "Jeane's Wedden Day" "Harvest Hwome," "The Common a-took in," and such like, are his subjects. Children, young maidens, flowers, soft west winds, church bells, happy Sundays, and the sorrows in which there is no shame, are among his favourite themes.

I, a child of the wintriest north, owe so much to their poet that I can in some measure understand what the Dorset folk feel for him.

The poet's pure and beautiful genius is indissolubly linked with the land and the people that were dear to him. It will be indeed a degenerate race of Dorsetshire men that will cease to hold in reverence and love the memory of William Barnes.

*S. Macnaughtan's "War Memories."*

I HAVE no hesitation in saying that this is one of the most brilliant and poignant records which the war has produced.

Miss Macnaughtan seems to have been through most of her life an indefatigable diary keeper. It may seem an easy matter to keep a diary. As a matter of fact, it is very difficult. The number of really

vital, pungent, living diaries is very small. I hope that under judicious editing we may have the rest of Miss Macnaughtan's diary. She had evidently almost unlimited entry into the society of interesting and distinguished people. I remember something to do with the publication of one of her novels. She called on me at my office. Her appearance was certainly not prepossessing. She was apparently covered with black beads, which vibrated as she talked. She was homely in feature, but her face lighted up, and you saw it to be a good, Scotch, true face. She was talking about the proofs of her book, and she brought a collection of addresses to which pages were to be sent. They named an extraordinary number of great mansions, and I ventured to joke with Miss Macnaughtan on the subject, which she took very good-humouredly. Her novels are known to most people—shrewd, witty, kindly. But somehow, after reading this book, I feel that I know her better, and that I was not wise in failing to cultivate her acquaintance.

*George Gissing.*

MR. HARDY'S gentle urbanity encourages the novice to put questions, and greatly daring, I ventured to ask whether there were any young writers whom he admired. He instantly answered, "George Gissing," and gave me some account of *The Unclassed*. I found the book and read it, and afterwards read everything published by Gissing that I could find.



Years after I happened—never mind how—to spend some three days in a country place with Gissing. We had much intimate talk, but he made no reference at all to the peculiar circumstances of his life, which were then unknown to me. He looked like the very last man to have cultivated an intimacy with the slums. He was well dressed, bland, debonair, and communicative. We first found a point of union in Sir William Ramsay's book on *The Church in the Roman Empire*, which he had been reading with the keenest zest. From that we went on to other things. I could see that Gissing was much less disposed to talk about his own books than most authors. He spoke of them as pot-boilers produced under necessity. But he had ideas which I very imperfectly recollect of the books he might write. This meeting of ours must have taken place at a time when Gissing's domestic circumstances were maddening, but there was nothing to show this.

He entered with interest into all that was passing, and smiled and laughed with the rest. Afterwards I met him on various occasions, but never had the chance of another of those dialogues by which alone men become known to one another.

*Henry Seton Merriman.*

THOSE who met Mr. Scott can understand his extreme dislike for publicity. I knew him very slightly, but it was easy to see that he was averse from publicity, and that his view of life was serious.

Pensive is the word that fits him, I think. He, was not exactly melancholy, for, as his preface shows, he had great pleasure in his work, and bestowed severe and conscientious labour on everything he wrote. An introduction tells us that four of his early books have been suppressed. Some years ago, in Boulogne, I obtained them from the good old library of Messrs. Merridew. *Young Mistle* is the best, and should perhaps have been preserved. If I am not mistaken the story is that of a young man warned by his doctor that he can only live a year or two. He tells no one, but necessarily his course of action is altered, and there is much perplexity among his friends. Scott himself, who was never robust, and who died early, thoroughly understood a situation like this.

*Andrew Lang.*

MR. ANDREW LANG died suddenly at Ban-chory on Sunday morning. He succumbed to disease of the heart. The news came with a shock, for few of us had realised that Mr. Lang was on the borders of the allotted span of human life. Whom the gods love die young, and he remained young under the growing burden of the years. If to be young is to be alert, agile, eager, interesting, audacious, then certainly Mr. Lang was young when he died, as he had been young while he lived. He continued his work to the very end. On Monday with the news of his death, the *Manchester Guardian* published a review of the new volumes of *The Golden*

*Bough*, which was dated July 20th. His usual article appeared in the *Morning Post* on Friday. Thus his versatility and his industry did not fail him. He was essentially a journalist, and all journalists were proud of him. His light, bright, whimsical, scholarly, and gallant papers have attracted readers and admirers for more than a generation. We cannot easily part with a man so gifted, so individual, so fully equipped with weapons, so debonair, so broad in his interests. No contributor to the press has achieved in our time so great a popularity, for though Andrew Lang was anything but a mere journalist, he contrived somehow to make his name a household word. That is no small achievement.

When we consider the vast and varied output of Mr. Lang, we may well find it difficult to discover a formula which will describe him. Perhaps we come nearest the truth if we call him a scholar gipsy. He was a gipsy, and if he was not in the full sense of the word a scholar, he was at least a bookman of the first order.

The fact that leapt to one's eyes on seeing Mr. Lang, or even on looking at the best of his portraits, (that by Richmond is much the truest) was that he was a gipsy.

We may add that he looked more like a gipsy than ever in his last years, when the "brindled" hair was white. Who that ever saw him can forget the dancing mischief in his black eyes? In a way he was the flower of Oxford culture, and yet to the last there was something about him untamed and unsubdued. At the

five-hundredth anniversary celebration at St. Andrews University he was to be seen strolling about with his doctor's robes worn over a suit of bright mustard-coloured tweed. This was characteristic of the gipsy. Equally characteristic was his bearing in society. He could be perfectly charming as a guest, and he could be the reverse. It was not possible for him to suffer fools gladly, or to endure boredom politely. When he was bored—and he was very easily bored—he made everyone know it. He could be supercilious and even contemptuous. All this was part of his gipsydom.

A love of books was the gift given to him by the fairies.

## HAPPINESS

### *Happy Marriages.*

#### I

THE course of true love never did run smooth. Never? Has ever anyone seen it run smooth to the very end? I believe a great many commonplace people have, and that it has been the romance and zest and triumph of their lives.

#### II

MANY years ago I was walking in Leeds and came on a secondhand bookshop. It detained me for a while. I read part of a Life of Lord Aberdeen which was in the collection, and it made an indelible impression on my mind. It struck me as the most poignant expression of a widower's sorrow I had ever come across.

#### III

THE Rev. Dr. W. S. Bruce, minister of Banff, has attained his jubilee in that position. Dr. Bruce said that not a few had had a fifty years' ministry, but he had held it in one place. He had never sought another pastorate nor seen any town he liked better than Banff. Dr. Bruce said that he had married

some 950 couples, and had a remarkable experience to relate of them. "Of the many marriages he knew of only two that had turned out unhappily."

These are points on which more information would be desirable. I have heard it said that one minister out of fifty reaches his jubilee, but I do not know how many make changes during that long period. As for happy marriages, that single sentence of Dr. Bruce's is enough to sweep away a great deal of rubbish, but obviously it is difficult to know whether a marriage is happy or not. The vast pastoral experience of Dr. Bruce accounts for a great deal.

[The last two paragraphs were the Editor's final contribution to his paper, March 1923.]

### *Midnight Tea.*

THERE were four of us round a dinner table on Thursday evening.

All agreed that the chief antagonist of happiness was bitter and almost unremitting physical pain. Three of us also maintained that many lives were blighted by a great desolation of the affections, though on this point Miss A. dissented. She did not believe that in this age the affections were so strong as to be incurably wounded by any loss.

After coming home I began to think of our conversation, and especially of pain as an antagonist to happiness, and I remembered an essay written twenty years ago by a great sufferer, with the strange title which I have borrowed to-day, "Midnight Tea." The

essayist confessed that this title was practically a misnomer. She was thinking of two, three, or four in the morning. She suffered from one of those forms of illness which eat the sweet kernel out of sleep, and whose particular pride it is to make the small hours hideous. \* These maladies know the time like a chronometer, and in the small hours they hold high carnival. But at intervals they have mercy, and seem to depart. Well, then, there are two friends, let us say, or a man and wife, or a mother and daughter, who pass the night together in order that one of the two who suffers may receive the help which only one hand can give. The immediate pain suddenly ceases. Then springs up a sudden thought out of the new, sweet peace : " Let us have a cup of tea." It can be managed at once. The tea is forthcoming, the spoons tinkle in the cups, the sweet incense goes up, and there are for a time calm and cheer, a soothed feeling, a quiet triumph in human resources, a genial gleam of light in the long tract of the dark hours. There may be no conversation save that highest form of conversation which passes between two who, through the love and intimacy of long years, understand what each is thinking, and interchange ideas without words. Sometimes there is a pleasant distraction from the first noises of the day outside, or perhaps the furniture creaks, which is pleasant when there are two to hear it, or some object that has been with you in the room for years reveals a something you have always missed. A woman's portrait will show you another light in the eyes, another curve in the lips, some fresh touch of

stateliness or of charm. It is altogether like an oasis, and it is good to look back upon when the burning desert has been traversed. There is hardly any such tie between human beings as "Do you remember?" and "Do you remember when we had midnight tea?" brings back many softening, hopeful thoughts. All this is written for those who will understand.



## HERE AND THERE

*Fletcher Moulton.*

IT was generally believed, by those who knew, that Lord Moulton's brains were the most powerful lodged in any mind of his time.

*The Kings of the Villages.*

I THINK it is true that every village has a king—or queen. The same is true of countrysides. One vivid personality generally unites each, but it is not easy to select the monarch unless he make himself known—which he is not likely to do. Of all the kings of villages and straths commend me to country doctors. They have largely taken the place of ministers in so far as living influence is concerned. This is a pity, but the doctor has several great advantages over the minister. He is not only welcomed, but passionately desired.

*Professor Saintsbury.*

I THINK that Mr. Saintsbury's articles from the beginning were signed, not perhaps at head or foot, but through every part of the piece. The first thing I read of his was an annual report of a school in Elgin, of which he was, if I mistake not, head master. And now I have lived to read *A Scrap Book*. The same hand has been busy throughout.

*Painter of "The Roll Call."*

LADY BUTLER has had a life of continuous and splendid success. I think there can be few successes obtained with greater cordiality and more richly and affectionately deserved. But I propose to use her for a few lines as a text.

She has had a great deal out of life, and has enjoyed it to the last minute, the last token of friendship. She shows it. She has had few days apparently into which the rain has fallen, and she is aware that she has been chosen to receive those gifts and acknowledgments. But there are some, perhaps many, amongst us who have only had a monotonous life, obscure and humble, to be made the best of, but not always visibly calling for thanks. I say that a day of keen happiness in a long lifetime is something, because one has to live up to the day. The glow goes on dimmed but undying. Who has not known fellow human beings who have lived spiritually upon a very little happiness and a very little success? But if they have had a good time they are wise to recall it, to contemplate it, and to live in its brighter memory when things outside look dark.

I knew an old journalist many years ago who had been in his time connected with *The Examiner* and *The Spectator* as publisher. He was not, I think, a writer, but he considered himself fully qualified for the best position that was vacant. He had had no luck in his life at all save once, and that was great good fortune—he actually wrote a moderately successful play. As far

as I could understand from him it was in this way. The society feeling during the Slavery War in America was largely adverse to the North. But the opinions of the British people were much better got at in other ways. They stood by America, and refused to be blinded as to the essence of the conflict. Somehow this journalist was a keen Southerner. He set himself to vindicate the South, exposing the lies told about the South. The play had no very long run, but it was a mighty help to happiness, such as it was. The newspaper hack with the threat of dismissal over all things became suddenly an important person, and he evidently enjoyed that period with the utmost relish of appreciation. He died in poverty and after many humiliations, but he kept his head above water, and I am confident he could hardly have done it save for his play.

*Andrew Lang.*

THE very best book he ever did was probably his first *Ballads and Lyrics of Old France*. With a singular perversity he for long refused to allow a second edition of this volume ; but that sweet Ronsardian note which rings through it is singularly winning, singularly haunting, and after long years we can still repeat pages of it.

*About London.*

I

LONDONERS, to the superficial eye, may seem to think little of their city. They abuse it, and they listen patiently when it is abused. But somehow

they do not leave it. The fact is, their belief in it is so profound and rooted that it does not trouble them when it is questioned. You must live in London for some time before you see how all the threads are gathered up in it. I don't care about that. The delight of London is that you are both Nothing and Something in it. This looks metaphysics, but is truth. You plunge into the mass and you are a free man. Nobody knows you or judges you. But even to hear the roar is to be something, to have your millionth part in such a place. And when London can be seen it is not unbeautiful. "London is a fine town and a gallant city," you might say sometimes, as you see on a bright day the golden cross of St. Paul's shine over city and river.

## II

ONE of the chief advantages of living in London is that the weather does not count for very much. The chief drawback of the country is that the weather counts for a great deal. Even lively persons succumb.

*Publishers and Authors.*

## I

PUBLISHERS are not eager for manuscripts. They have enough and to spare ; but authors are eager to get publishers. Let an unknown author write a clever manuscript, and he may send it to every firm in London without having it accepted. Unless

a man has made a reputation in another way than by writing, his first book is almost always published at his own risk, and generally costs him money. I suppose it is no secret that Messrs. Macmillan would have been quite pleased if *John Inglesant* had paid its expenses. Even for writers of great reputation there is comparatively small competition among publishers. One of the most popular of living novelists left a great publishing firm, because, after scoring a great success with one of his books, they refused to give him more than ten per cent. of royalty on the next.

## II

ON the general subject of publishing I have but one opinion, and that opinion is a dogma. Publishing is not so simple as it seems to many people. For that dogma I would go to the stake. For that dogma I would persecute and burn, if necessary, after giving due opportunities for recantation.

*The Discovery of Treasure.*

IN the first library I subscribed to we were allowed one volume at a time for one shilling a quarter. As I could not often change my books, and in the evenings and nights got through a great deal of reading, it was important for me to get my money's worth. The requirements of prudence and pleasure were abundantly satisfied when I discovered a file of *The Athenæum* in the collection. A year's numbers went to a volume, so it was no joke to carry it home, but

each book made three long nights' reading, and I do not know that I shall ever have as much pleasure in any evenings as in those short and solitary hours. For many years Hepworth Dixon was editor of *The Athenæum*, and I know now that he had his share of the infirmities of humanity, but he was remarkably successful in giving a certain tone and colour to the whole of his Journal. He himself was all over it, not in the way of writing articles, but in the way of altering phrases, writing in sentences, injecting squirts of venom, or, more rarely, pouring in drops of oil or wine.

*"Auld Licht Idylls" by Gavin Ogilvy.*

MR. OGILVY'S way is entirely his own. The book is nothing if it is not original. Its manner is that of a masterly etching. There is at first sight the impression of a certain coldness and austerity about the whole picture. The author is keenly alive to the grimness of the life he describes. The wildernesses of snow, the black ridges rising through them, the long, stern winter, the grim struggle with the workhouse which closes the life of weaving, the "Auld Lichts" starving themselves till they have saved enough to get a minister, the minister keeping his place by keeping them down: these and such things show as plainly on the picture as they show in the life of Thrums. Not more plainly, however. They are relieved in both by a certain dry light of humour and a rare and modest winter sunshine. But

there is no hopeful spring, or pleasant summer, or abundant autumn in the picture. Life at the best is "a sair fecht," and the people at no time, neither in courtship nor in death, give themselves tongue.

To say that Mr. Ogilvy is unsympathetic would convey a wholly wrong idea, because that word is taken to mean unfriendly. But he is not sympathetic like Dr. John Brown, or critical like George MacDonald. He is never disrespectful; he describes everything with a kind of impartial serenity.

One may easily see that if he is intolerant of anything he is intolerant of gush, and when there is danger of that he immediately makes his escape. But of the people and their ways of thinking he writes as an observer who, while familiar, is completely apart—it would not be too much to say as one who belongs to another race and other conditions, and who has no share either in their hopes or fears. You can see that he likes them; that in some ways he admires them; and that he thinks the practical results of their religion are not to be despised. I must not convey the impression that this is an uncheerful book. By no means. The writer can appreciate the mild, mitigating pleasures of life in Thrums—the pipe, the companionable flicker of the fire, the gatherings in the square of a Saturday night, and the lads and lasses and their protracted and inarticulate loves. In the "Courting of T'nowhead's Bell," my favourite idyll, the author is in his most genial mood, and even allows himself to smile. He has the power of pathos, too, and lets us see it—but that is all. To compare one so original

to any other writer would be misleading ; perhaps the least misleading thing one could say of him is that he is a Scottish Thomas Hardy.

“ *Shagpat*.”

I PROCURED for one and sixpence *The Shaving of Shagpat*, and also I got *Modern Love* for two shillings. These books I studied earnestly till I thought I understood them, and I am still of opinion that whoever understands the *Shaving of Shagpat*, *Modern Love*, and *Evan Harrington* knows a great deal of Meredith’s inner mind. *The Shaving of Shagpat* had one strong admirer at least. It used to be considered the main business of critics to pursue with their little watering-pots the prairie fire of popularity. They may do little, perhaps they may even pour oil on the flame, but the fire burns out in due time. There was no need for anyone to attempt staying the popularity of *The Shaving of Shagpat*, for it had very little. George Eliot was at that time emerging from the obscurity of a reviewer, and writing her first story, *The Sad Fortunes of Amos Barton*. She compared *Shagpat* to Beckford’s *Vathek*, which Byron admired so much, and said she had received more pleasure from *The Shaving of Shagpat* than from its popular predecessor. She thought George Meredith’s book might have been called *The Thousand and Second Arabian Night*. Not that it was an imitation. It was a worthy following, which came from genuine love and mental affinity. But George Eliot acutely remarked that Meredith had no wish to study the



popular mood, and she was right, for the first edition of *Shagpat* was sold as a remainder, and nine years elapsed before a second edition was issued.

*Meeting Meredith.*

BY and by Meredith came up and accosted Gissing with marked graciousness and interest. We all felt that we were in a noble and illustrious presence. None of the paintings and photographs of Meredith do him justice. He had a finer head than any of them presents to posterity, and the serene and honoured evening of his life brought to his features an expression of peace and geniality not fully found in any likeness. He was even then somewhat infirm, but moved with much stateliness, and spoke in a loud and cordial voice.

*Meredith's Women.*

MEREDITH saw that the highest charm of woman is her womanhood, not her gifts, nor her beauty, nor her virtues, but her womanhood. Who has given us such a gallery of women as Meredith has? Some will prefer the wild sweetness of one, the purity as of fire of another. And others of us will take as our heroine Cecilia, that pure and proud lily with a heart of gold.

*A Cave of Jewels.*

WHEN I open Boswell I feel as Aladdin did when he raised the stone without any trouble and laid it by the side of him.

*Emerson's Expectation.*

I THINK some stress ought to be laid on Emerson's expectation of a Messiah. His attitude was almost Jewish. A Messiah was due from God. He would probably be an American Messiah. "Americans must not miss him. Where would the Messiah be found? Emerson's study had convinced him that the Messiah would appear among the "cranks" so-called. "None of the princes of this world knew." So he was amazingly tolerant to men like Bronson Alcott and Thoreau, women like Margaret Fuller, and experiments like Brook Farm. He viewed them with an open and hopeful mind. The regeneration of the world, in his judgment, would come from some modern seer. And though he was keenly alive to the occasional absurdities in *The Dial* and its contributors, he was tolerant and more than tolerant. He would have smiled at the lady who inquired at a lecture, "Mr. Alcott, does Omnipotence abnegate attribute?" It is difficult to believe that he was not amused at the words with which *The Dial* ended: "Energise about the Hecatic sphere." But he was loyal for all that. No one valued Alcott so highly. He would listen to him when the rest had fled. Of Thoreau he said: "Wherever there is knowledge, wherever there is virtue, wherever there is beauty, he will find a home." When Margaret Fuller died, he said, "My audience is gone." He made haste to welcome Walt Whitman, though it is said that his admiration of the poet abated.

There is nothing more striking in the correspondence between Carlyle and Emerson than their respective attitudes to the mild-eyed Buddhas who appeared from time to time. Carlyle had no patience with men like Alcott. Emerson saw all that Carlyle saw, but he saw deeper and farther. There is no correspondence between men of equal intellectual rank which shows so little intellectual sympathy. In the end of the day, the difference between Carlyle and Emerson was a difference of first principles. Carlyle was so deeply imbued with a belief in the depravity of the human race that he ceased to have hope. Emerson never weakened in his optimism, neither was he discouraged by the appearance of many false Messiahs. He looked upon them as the inevitable precursors of the true Christ.

*Emerson's Judgment.*

EMERSON has been highly and justly valued for the singular insight of his literary judgment. Those who care little for his Transcendentalism, and think that his chin is in the air whenever he speaks of the greater religions, recognise his royal and certain perception of character and genius. Many of his sentences ring like oracles, as when he says of Goethe, "His affections help him like women employed by Cicero to worm out the secrets of conspirators"; and when he says in his *English Traits*, "The great men of England are singularly ignorant of religion." He is never rude or scornful or arrogant. A native and inalienable benignity characterises all his judg-

ments, but to the moral idea he is ever faithful. To him genius in man is the Godhead in distribution. Genius is religion, and all the great ages have been ages of faith. "In the voice of genius I hear invariably the moral tone, even when it is disowned in words." Of course he is sometimes in error, as when he says that Shelley is never a poet, though he is always poetical in mind ; but his lapses are much less frequent than those of Matthew Arnold.

*About Masson and Milton.*

THE work by which Masson will mainly be remembered is his *Life of Milton*, which was planned in London. It is a book that can never be superseded. It is based on the most accurate and laborious research. The work was mainly done in the Record Office. He had to go over masses of manuscripts not then arranged. He believed that he went over everything, and missed nothing relevant to the subject. He had also to work among the pamphlets, and at the King's Library in the British Museum. He made immense notebooks often far in advance of the actual volume he was doing, and got on slowly. He gave himself intervals of rest, and when he was working had so many hours a day, though there was more to show at the end of one day than another. This depended on the handling of the materials. He did not grow weary of his task, but he had a distinct feeling of exhilaration when he finished the last volume. The *Life of Milton* is the great history of Puritanism, and it will remain so, not merely on

account of the author's profound research, but because of its literary power and splendour, and the vehement passion for religious liberty which inspires it throughout.

*A. G. Benson.*

ONE cannot help admiring Mr. Benson's easy handling of life and language, the deftness with which he tells stories, and the mingled courage and sympathy with which he surveys the scene of existence. But for some he is too little of a combatant, and too resolutely comfortable. "I have wandered far enough in my thoughts, it would seem, from the lonely grange in its wide pastures and the calm expanse of fen ; and I should wish once more to bring my reader back home with me to the sheltered garden, and the orchard knee-deep in grass, and the embowering elms." This is one point of view, but it is not the point of view from which most of us observe the world.

In spite of the critics, the essayist will continue, and even if he is obscured for a time he will have a revival. If he is commonplace he writes mostly for commonplace people, and it is with the problems of life rather than with literature, or science, or politics that the heart of man is most deeply engaged.

*Of Lord Rosebery.*

LORD ROSEBERY has much in common with Lord Macaulay, and he has Macaulay's power of setting every man and every place clearly before us. He is capable of very bold and most righteous decisions.

Thus he sets aside Pitt's love-letters, classifying them with the terrible correspondence between Burns and Clarinda. I know very few men who would have shown the same courage. The narrative is clear and orderly. We are not shifted about from place to place and from name to name. The biographer stands over his materials, moulds them into form, and guides them to their end. We close the book, feeling that what is to be known of the first period of Pitt's life, the period of struggle, is now given us in final form by a man of genius and of heart, who has considered his subject under all lights and with perfect impartiality, who has told us the truth, who has never assumed knowledge where he has been ignorant, or condemned without hearing the defence.

If Lord Rosebery had not been claimed by politics he would undoubtedly have taken a high station among men of letters. Even as it is, he has done so. The comparatively brief and occasional appearances which he has made in literature have commanded the attention of the world. It seems to me that Lord Rosebery's bent is to estimate great characters, and that he brings to this business a rare combination of qualities.

*Holmeses and Browns.*

THERE is abundant room in the world for the Holmeses as well as for the Browns. We cannot help admiring the undaunted cheerfulness with which Holmes met everything to the last. When as a very old man he visited Stonehenge, and one of his companions called out, "Hark, hark, hear the lark

is singing!" he listened, but not a sound reached his ear. He felt a momentary pang, a very sweet emotion of self-pity which took the sting out of his painful discovery, "that the orchestra of my pleasing life entertainment was unstringing its instruments." He was a gallant soul, a nature full of freshness and courage. But Holmes did not see much further into the abyss than Voltaire did. In cleverness, in fertility, in alertness, in flashing wit, he was John Brown's superior. But John Brown's work, simple and unpretending as it is, will live, because it is truly and firmly based on very vivid memories of past feeling and past sorrows. It is the work of a man who knew better than most what it is to love, and what it is to suffer, and it may be wiser to sink under the weight of great enigmas than to solve them falsely.

*A Musing on E. F. G.*

I HAVE seen FitzGerald blamed for allowing himself to see so little of such friends as Tennyson and Thackeray, but he exchanged letters with them, and is it not likely that a shy recluse like FitzGerald would shrink from meeting an old associate after the lapse of years? He would fear to see the result of the wreckful siege of battering days. He would shrink from seeing how roughly the inexorable hand of time had struck them. He would shrink from going back on stony spaces of the road. In his imagination they would remain fair and young, and perhaps he preferred to cherish them so. At all events he shows in the memoir of Barton that this feature of Barton's friend-

ships is one that has struck him very much, and perhaps helped to soothe his conscience.

Edward FitzGerald lived and moved and had his outer being within narrow limits, which he rarely transgressed. But his mind soared and roamed through every field of thought,

"North and south and west and east,  
Winds loved best and winds loved least,"

and he brought back spoil. The adventurous daring of his speculation is in strange contrast with his timid, domestic tea-drinking, Waverley-novel-reading life. But for the one the other was no doubt necessary. Edward FitzGerald could never have been a hustler. Dr. Marigold told us long ago that "you must wake up all the whole family of thoughts you have got, and burn their nightcaps, or you won't do in the cheap-jack business." FitzGerald could do nothing in the cheap-jack business. He could not burn the nightcaps of his thoughts and set them all a-rushing. We have the great letters which place him with Cowper and Lamb in the triad of the masters in this kind. All three wrote out of the peace of defeat. We have the poems. Most of us launch our paper-boats on a sea of fire; his have won the shore.

*Entering a Foreign Town.*

IT is to *The Dodd Family Abroad*, more than any other book, that one must look, for a true idea of the way in which English families used to travel on



that he talked very much about the darker side of city life, and was familiar with its tragedy. But in his books he hardly approaches it, and one can say that he did not think it could be safely approached. With Lever, the impression is that of a sound purity that never dived into the black heart of things. He was most fortunate in his marriage, and although the letters show us that he was burdened by the debts of his son, he was happy in his family life. His great trouble was his extravagance. From first to last he was always in debt and difficulty. His income from his writings seems to have been in his best days nearly £3,000 a year, and he could generally make about £1,200. In addition, he had for a time some £300 a year as Vice-Consul at Spezzia, and latterly twice the amount as Consul at Trieste. But he was always hard up.

What wonder? When he was a young doctor at Brussels, he wrote, "I had three Earls and two Ambassadors on Tuesday." And he gave weekly soirées to the great guns and Lords and Marquises without number. He boasted that he had a very handsome house, and that the entertaining had been done admirably well. He bought for £50 a new uniform in which to make his bow to the King of the Belgians. When in Rome he spent as much in one day as he usually spent in a week. He was devoted to whist, and frequently lost a good deal more than he could afford. He was constantly victimised by adventurers. On one occasion he writes that he had been "walked into by a swindler to the amount of £145."

Thus he was always writing for money : " For God's sake send me some gilt ; I am terribly hard up just now."

Like many such men, he got through wonderfully. We read that when he was in great difficulties, his daughter became engaged to a man with £7,000 a year. He was extremely fortunate in falling in with John Blackwood at a critical period in his life. That excellent man treated him with the greatest wisdom and generosity, and could give him guidance in life as well as in letters.

*" Clara Vaughan " and Rapture.*

WE are all very much influenced by the circumstances of our childhood. My reading began in this manner. I had a nurse who once read a little, but had forgotten the way, and she subscribed to periodicals then very popular—*The London Journal* and *The Family Herald*. She gave me a penny a week for reading the stories in these papers to her, and so I became familiar with the early work of Miss Bradon, with the novels of Pierce Egan, and with many others. We had also another journal, called *Cassell's Family Paper*, and I remember with some pride the rapture with which I read a story which appeared in its pages. No author's name was given, but many a year after I stopped at a barrow in Farringdon Street and saw some extremely dilapidated volumes. On examining them I found that the favourite novel of my childhood was the first novel of R. D. Blackmore,

*Clara Vaughan*, and even now, after knowing *Lorna Doone*, and the other books, I still think that Blackmore never did better than in some chapters of his earliest production.

*A Lifetime with Trollope.*

IT is delightful and consoling to remember now and then that there are so many books by Trollope. Some are much inferior to the rest, but every one can be read without difficulty. He would keep most people in good reading for a lifetime. I would have the reader begin with *Framley Parsonage*, because it is one of the author's very best, and also because it is complete and independent in itself.

*The Ruling Passion.*

THE rereader is very often a person who has a passion for books, and who is greatly restricted in his choice of books. This may seem an unfortunate condition, but it is not. Happy is the child born amid a small collection of really valuable volumes. He is likely to learn without teaching the pleasures of reading and the pleasures of rereading.

There are not a few who begin early to devour books, and who learn to prefer reading to all other occupations. Of these was James Payn. He tells us that he was an omnivorous reader as a boy, with a marked distaste for study and sport. His father kept the Berkshire harriers, and the boy had to go hunting

twice a week. This he abhorred, though he had a nice little bay pony and could ride well enough. The proceedings were too protracted for his taste, and he wanted to be at home to finish *The Mysteries of Udolpho* by the fire. He disliked fox-hunting even more than hare-hunting, but all his family had sporting proclivities, and he had to go through with it. Sometimes the waiting about and having nothing to read grew absolutely intolerable. There was then nothing for it but to dismount, put clover or something in his hair, smear his shoulder with mould, and ride home, "having met with rather a nasty tumble." It would have been better and cheaper to have let him enjoy *Captain Cook's Voyages* and *The Arabian Nights* all day without the temptation of practising duplicity.

*The Horrors of Famine.*

WHEN Payn went afterwards to Woolwich Military Academy, his bitter complaint was that there was no time for reading and writing. There are those to whom the having nothing to read is an intense grievance. They instinctively look round for a book wherever they go, and they are often bitterly disappointed. It is a predicament indeed to be landed on a visit where the house is destitute of books, and where there is no library near. I have heard of a reader so insatiable that he tried to get squints into odd volumes even during the penitential process of morning calls. This is a length to which few would go, but

I would rather read a list of hotels or a week-old advertisement sheet than do without reading at all.

*Books that take Time.*

MANY of the best books will not yield their secret at a first reading. They demand to be very slowly and carefully and frequently perused. At a dinner-party the other evening we had a discussion about difficult books. I ventured to say that Darwin's *Origin of Species* is one of the most difficult books in the English language. Nobody was more qualified than Huxley to understand it, and Huxley expounded it to the English public. But so late as 1888 Huxley writes: "I have been reading the *Origin* slowly again for the *n*th time, with the view of picking out the essentials of the argument for the obituary notice. Nothing entertains me more than to hear people call it easy reading." Another very difficult writer is Bishop Butler. The reason is, that every sentence is a link in an argument, closely welded as with links of iron. If you miss or misunderstand one sentence, you speedily lose the meaning. Browning is undeniably difficult in many parts, and chiefly perhaps in his earliest and latest books. Whether his obscurity is to be counted sin to him or not, I do not need to discuss; but I question whether some of his later work has as yet found a true interpreter—especially *Fifine at the Fair*, with its accompaniments. But the mastering of a great writer enriches, fructifies, and expands the mind more than any other discipline.

*Association of Ideas.*

WHEN we know, not merely by reading or by imagining, what a great phase of life may mean either in joy or in sorrow, we discover new messages and new meanings in familiar pages. Even a small experience adds to the significance of our reading. The other morning I had read some melancholy news about a coal strike. I happened immediately after to take up Sydney Smith's *Rules for a Happy Life*, and came on this, "Keep up blazing fires." Turning over several books through the day, I came upon references to fires and coals. These would never have been noticed save for the circumstances of the day. Once I remember getting some teeth extracted, and after it every book I read seemed to have references to teeth, white teeth, gleaming teeth, strong teeth, bad teeth.

*Swinburne's Best.*

PERHAPS the most wonderful of all his achievements was his success in the lines :

"Where beyond the extreme sea-wall and between the remote  
sea-gates,  
Waste water washes, and tall ships founder, and deep death  
waits."

*A Sober World.*

## I

WE have to admit, I think, that the world is less cheerful, less sanguine, than it was, say, fifty or sixty years ago. Nobody will forget the famous

meeting in Boswell between Dr. Johnson and his old class-fellow, Oliver Edwards. They had been separated for forty years, and met by chance in the street. Edwards was living on a little farm of about sixty acres just by Stevenage, and was happy seeing his grass, his corn, and his trees growing. He addressed his illustrious friend : " You are a philosopher, Dr. Johnson. I have tried too, in my time, to be a philosopher ; but, I don't know how, cheerfulness was always breaking in." Boswell tells us here that Burke, Reynolds, and others to whom he mentioned this thought it an exquisite trait of character. Dr. Birkbeck Hill quotes the story of Hume, who, when he began to be known in the world as a philosopher, was admonished by Mr. White, a decent rich merchant of London. " I am surprised, Mr. Hume, that a man of your good sense should think of being a philosopher. Why, I did take it into my head to be a philosopher for some time, but tired of it most confoundedly, and very soon gave it up." " Pray, sir," said Mr. Hume, " in what branch of philosophy did you employ your researches ? What books did you read ?" " Books ?" said Mr. White ; " nay, sir, I read no books, but I used to sit whole forenoons a-yawning and poking the fire." Horace Walpole wrote from Paris in 1766 : " The generality of the men, and more than the generality, are dull and empty. They have taken up gravity, thinking it was philosophy, and English, and so have acquired nothing in the room of their natural levity and cheerfulness."

*Grave Young Men.*

## I

WHAT it is that sensibly abates the good spirits of the younger generation it is not easy to say. Even young men seem to have a frequent oppression of heart. The middle-aged and the old are, to say the least, grave and anxious. Perhaps it is the obvious instability of many institutions that promised to stand which depresses the minds of not a few. I have been reading the life of that amiable and excellent philosopher, Henry Sidgwick, and am struck by his gloomy forebodings. Sidgwick had, as things go, a singularly prosperous and happy life. He kept brooding over the signs of the times, and the longer he thought of them the more he feared.

## II

I HAVE known one who found when the worst came to the worst that the only novel he could read was *Wilhelm Meister*. It seems an odd choice, but it may be understood. Nothing is easier for the Philistine than to pick holes in *Wilhelm Meister*; all that Jeffrey said against it, all that De Quincey said against it, is true in a way. But Carlyle understood it, and his mother understood it, and it brought to each a measure of strength and light.

*Back to Reviewing.*

PERHAPS the most interesting form of the personal review is that in which the critic from his own knowledge can say something about the author. "I



take up this book with peculiar feelings. I sat on the same bench with the author at college. We knew him as Jimmy Thompson. He shone especially in the Greek class; his translations recalled for classical grace and beauty the famous verses of Professor Gilbert Murray. He was always ready, and yet he never seemed to work," and so on, and so on.

But this is not always possible, and then you must do the best you can. Here is a new book, let us say, by Mr. Charles Garvice. Begin: "I shall never forget while memory lasts my first introduction to Mr. Garvice's work. I was starting for India one dark, wet autumn evening. My friend—the friend of my boyhood and my manhood, Harry Blyth—insisted on accompanying me to the gloomy station of Waterloo. (I hope it is Waterloo.) He went to the bookstall, and as the train was starting he pressed a volume into my hand. 'There,' he said, 'is a book that will delight you. You will not know a moment's weariness as long as you are reading it. That is by Charles Garvice.' Poor Harry Blyth! We know not what is before us. I went to India, and lived through torrid and adventurous years in a pestilential climate. He went back to his quiet but not unprofitable task. When I had overpast my dangers and come back to London, I heard that my friend had been struck with apoplexy as he was turning over the pages of his ledger. Such is life." This is a pretty good beginning, and then may follow some account of the book in hand.

*On Daniel Defoe.*

THERE was never a more wonderful career than that of Daniel Defoe. He has perplexed all his bibliographers. How he wrote so much and did so much is hardly to be explained. For he meddled with everything. He wrote so many pamphlets that no one can ever hope to produce a complete list. Some of his papers he both edited and wrote. He was interrupted every now and then by the penalties of the law, and was hardly ever out of peril. No publisher will ever dare to produce a complete edition of his work ; in fact, there are some nine large volumes of his, of which a unique set exists in the British Museum, which have never been reprinted, and in all probability never will be reprinted. Yet when he was nearly sixty, while not ceasing to be an assiduous journalist and pamphleteer, he became a novelist, and continued so for the ten or eleven years that remained to him. He wrote one book at the beginning of this period which will never die—*Robinson Crusoe*.

*A Point about Boswell.*

MR. BAILEY gives us a paper called "Johnson without Boswell," and points out that his paper appeared in 1907, and that Sir Walter Raleigh's "Johnson without Boswell" was published in 1910. But the title was used long ago. It was used in *The Contemporary Review* some thirty years ago at least by Mr. William Cyples, one of those clever, wayward writers whom Mr. Strahan gathered round about him.

I cannot help thinking that Mr. Bailey, like so many others, misses the mark in handling this theme. The main question is : If we had known Johnson only by his works and the reminiscences of his contemporaries would we have judged him as we do now with Boswell in our hands? The answer is : (1) We should have greatly underrated his intellectual powers. (2) We should have understood very imperfectly the rugged grandeur of his character ; and (3) we should never have known his real opinions on one of the most difficult and urgent of ethical problems, the relation of the sexes.

*On Novel-writing.*

AFTER all the best course for the novelist is the best course for every workman. He should do his best. So long as he is certain that he is not scamping his work, that he is not writing without vocation, that his craft is not a mere mechanical operation, let him go on as long as the public will have him. The true critic will not ask when a book was written, or how long it took in the composition. He will judge the thing as it stands, and say whether it is good or bad. But there are no faults which will provoke him so much as the manifest carelessness and heedlessness of a man capable of doing good work, but unwilling to give to that work the necessary time and pains.

I suppose we may say, taking a broad view of the field of literature, that even the highest genius is hardly

capable of turning out more than about a dozen works representative of his powers. But the secondary work may have elements of strength and beauty. The very finest work of Dickens was done when he finished *David Copperfield*, but we should miss much the novels of the later period. When Sir Walter Scott wrote *Woodstock* he had said farewell to his great creative time. But how much there is to linger over in the work that followed. Thackeray, I venture to think, was more completely written out when he died than any of our great novelists. There are beauties in the very last unfinished work, but who can say much for *Lovel the Widower*? There is weariness in every line of it. Nay, there is the last weariness, the weariness of a hand that has come close on its work's end.

*The Author's Relations.*

IN families where one member is highly distinguished there is generally more than average talent in the other members. The Newmans, the Trollopes, the Kingsleys, the Tennysons, the Taylors of Ongar, and the Thackerays are illustrations.

*The Work of the Journalist.*

I

FREQUENTLY the journalist will not undertake to identify his own work. All that Goldwin Smith in his old age could recollect about his famous contributions to *The Saturday Review* was a paper in the first number about Tennyson's "Maud."

The vast majority of men who were effective, and powerful journalists in their day are utterly forgotten. There is not even an obituary notice to be found in the papers they edited. They moved in the spheres of their work seen by their fellow-citizens continually, but wholly unrecognised and unknown. They carried on their controversies with vehemence and even with ferocity ; but they and their contemporaries stand together on these shelves silent.

“ Their hatred and their love is lost,  
 Their envy buried in the dust ;  
 They have no share in all that's done  
 Beneath the circuit of the sun.”

It may be that they furnish the materials for history, but they become so numerous that by and by no one will be able to read them with anything like completeness. As it is, the journalism of the age of Johnson, small as it was, has not found a really comprehending and masterly historian.

## II

TO those who have had a share in the writings of these papers their aspect brings back the past. Here is a volume in which we wrote many columns long ago. Shall we take it down and try to recapture the moods of youth ? Better leave it. Better submit with a good grace to our doom of oblivion. Journalists take some pride in their work if they do it conscientiously.

*The Speaker's Advantage.*

IT may be said that the speaker has no better fate than the journalist. His words are soon forgotten. Some of them may be reported, and thus he has a second day in his life ; but that is all of it. And yet this is not quite true, for the speaker cannot be dis-severed from his speech, and thus something of his personality as well as of his work comes before the public mind.



*V. BOOKS: WRITERS AND READERS*



*Reading has been the chief pleasure of my life. It has given me so much pleasure that I feel that I am in danger of falling into extravagance when I speak of it.*

## POINTS TO OBSERVE

### *Swift and Stella.*

AS for Swift, I am quite convinced that he never in any real sense loved Stella. No man could have loved who wrote the poems which Swift addressed to her as the years went on. Nor do I believe that he loved Vanessa, though on this point there is more room for doubt.

### *Feeling and Expression.*

THE writer who has deep feeling of any kind and can express it so as to awaken it in others, is almost sure to be very popular. Few people feel deeply, or, rather, I should say that few who feel deeply can express their feelings. Those who can succeed with the multitude. To begin with, even the feeling of anger interests people. You go down a London street and hear two women quarrelling, and you pause or slow your steps to listen. Anybody is interesting when he is in a rage.

### *"That immortal Book."*

I HAVE never seen a criticism of Mr. Barrie which recognises the cardinal fact in his literary history—the change that took place between the *Auld Licht*

*Idylls* and *A Window in Thrums*. All that could be said against the first book was that the writer stood too much outside his subjects. He never betrayed sympathies or recognised personal duty in the circle of things he drew. The danger was that he might become a keen observer and nothing more. Landor was the type of such. His writings bear the stamp of the old mocking Paganism—of a man with no Sparta to adorn or love. In *A Window in Thrums*—that immortal book—all was changed. It gave solemn and moving expression to thoughts that lay deep in the mind of the writer, but did not shine through at first.

*Human Life and Nature's Life.*

I FELT more strongly than ever that Mr. Hardy is almost the only novelist who can weave together the life of man and woman, and the life of nature. The landscape is always taking an important place in his books, and a truer, more delicate, more profound reader of landscape than Mr. Hardy may not easily be discovered. But the special characteristic of his work is that the landscape scenes are an essential part of the story. In many novels we have bits about nature, which may be good or may be bad, but which, in either case, might be removed without interfering with the narrative. Mr. Hardy sees the link that binds in dissoluble union humanity and nature. It is no doubt by living in his own land so long, loving it so well, brooding over it so patiently, that Mr. Hardy is able to make his books perennially fresh and interest-

ing.. We should not wish him ever to go outside his kingdom in which he has room and energy enough.

*Tennyson's Secret.*

WHEN Dryden died, as Macaulay says, his secret was buried in his grave. Many felt the same thing about Tennyson, especially when they read the lines beginning :

“ When the dumb Hour, clothed in black,  
Brings the Dreams about my bed.”

They are as simple as simple can be, and yet no one before Tennyson could ever have written them. Nor is it likely that anyone capable of the same achievement will ever be born again.

*Without Emotion.*

WHILE there is a great deal to be said for dispassionateness and catholicity of mind, they may be carried too far. A man who takes a dispassionate view of his wife, a catholic view of his friends, is apt to be rewarded in kind, and he rarely likes it. When the rain descends and the winds blow on our house of life, it is not from the candid or the impartial that our help comes.

*The Author Bound to Write.*

GIVEN even a scanty measure of leisure, with education and pen and ink, and the novelists, even in a short time, will do their work. The great

majority do their work before half their writing is finished. That is, they are vital only for one-half, and afterwards they sink on the whole. Scott would have stood quite as high if he had left us only the first twelve of his novels. Charles Dickens might have stood even higher if he had ceased when at the end of *David Copperfield*. But the author who is bound to write is the man or woman who has acquired, by the continual study of years, exceptional sources of knowledge. If that knowledge is not bequeathed, posterity is a heavy loser.

*A Common Error.*

WE are not all novelists, but most of us have tried to be. It is a mistake, however, to suppose that everybody can write at least one good novel.

*Edwin Drood.*

THE proof that Edwin Drood was murdered is to my mind mainly to be found in the pages of the story. One would have to print a large part of it in order to convey the impressive and unmistakable force of the whole, but perhaps it is better to read it as Dickens wrote it.

For he himself advances nothing to modify or mitigate the conclusion that, as the result of a carefully designed plot, Edwin Drood was foully murdered by his uncle.

The murder of Edwin Drood had been so long

premeditated that Jasper had done it hundreds and thousands of times in the opium den.

Helena, and no other, is Datchery. I have taken no account of the theory that Datchery is an unknown person. An unknown person could not possess the necessary qualities of heart.

*Why did Shakespeare retire?*

IF Shakespeare were in Stratford-on-Avon now, or any other English provincial town, many would ignore him, many more would decry him. The county people would consider anxiously whether or not he should be visited. The comrades of his childhood, many of them at least, would resent his rise in life, and depreciate his family. Friends and worshippers he might find, but they would be a small minority. A watchful and jealous curiosity would be turned like a microscope on all his doings. One of the very few things we know about Shakespeare is that he spent much of his last days in litigation. It was pitiful work, and yet one understands how Shakespeare might have been driven into it against his will. Jealousy, envy, malice may have conspired to make his path difficult. Whether he was disappointed or not we cannot tell, but probably he never repented his choice. A great authority on this subject said to me that there was such a thing as the love of a man for his mother earth, and he would be happy upon it whoever molested him, and never quite happy away from it.

"*Kismet*."

NO one can read Mr. Hardy with understanding without perceiving how again and again at a certain stage in the history of his characters, it may be even from the beginning, he tacitly assumes the power to will has been taken away.

*The Writer of Essays.*

THERE is one thing he must do, no matter how clever he is. He must put in many sentences which, taken out of their context, are the direst and most tedious of platitudes. So I say he is at the mercy of the critic.

In "*Kim*."

THE salient point about *Kim* is that it exhibits the author for a moment as a pupil in the school of Charles Dickens. In any school Mr. Kipling would do well, and gain prizes. Under Dickens he has become genial in temper, mild and moderate in judgment and speech. He has caught up with very considerable success Dickens's manner of conceiving and working out his characters.

*On Personal Experience.*

THE autobiography of J. K. Hunter, a book apparently forgotten, but full of matter, contains this saying, "I remarked that had I been painting

a Judas, I would have selected a thin-lipped, smiling, silly-like, nice man." Such was the Judas whom Hunter knew.

*Miss Austen's Work.*

LONDON, which has long been the great nerve-knot of this country, does not play an important part in Miss Austen's books, and in *Emma*, which is perhaps the best of them, it is hardly mentioned at all. Everybody seems to be within a drive. Tragedy scarcely enters the sequestered life. There is time for the sedate flowering of every quality. Death is almost completely excluded. I can remember in the whole range of Miss Austen's fiction but one death, and that takes place off the stage.

*Scott's Characterisation.*

TAKE Mattie in *Rob Roy*. All she says is about four words, and yet she is a perfect and distinct character. We are interested in her fate, while prepared to believe that she behaved excellently well in her exaltation. Jenny Caxon in *The Antiquary* is another, and Grace Armstrong in *The Black Dwarf*, who speaks only one sentence, is a third. Little Janet Foster, the Puritan of Cumnor Hall, is unforgettable, and surely Jenny Dennison is incomparable. They are all different, they are all alive, and they are all given to us in a very few, masterly, final, sufficient strokes.



## I

*The Sad Fate of Many Authors.*

THE way in which the majority of novelists sooner or later find their public falling away from them is at once mysterious and tragical. They write as well as ever they did, and they know it, but somehow their audience ceases to assemble.

## II

*Their Chance.*

THE book may fall into the ground and die as a seed dies, and yet bring forth much fruit. Further, a book may be forgotten for generations, and yet some copies of it linger here and there. At any moment these may find their proper, their predestined reader, perhaps the eager boy with flushed cheek for whom they were in reality written, and for whom they may be waiting.

*Thomas Carlyle.*

D<sup>R.</sup> MASSON comments : " He told me himself that when a child he was always crying." I venture to think that this is a really significant contribution to Carlyle's biography. It is an epitome of Carlyle's whole life. He was always crying.

*About Dickens.*

## I

DICKENS had high spirits when he wrote *Pickwick* : but it is a curious fact that he wrote about the same time *Oliver Twist* and *The Mudfog*

*Papers*, which are full of bitterness. The latter, by the way, is a very clever and entertaining book, not half enough well known.

## II

I AM prepared to prove, when occasion offers, that Dickens very nearly plagiarised from Smollett. He never did the same for anyone else. He was the most original of writers.

## READING

### *A Confession.*

THE works of Mark Rutherford have done more for me by a great deal than the work of any other contemporary author.

### *The Joy of a Fresh Cover.*

I, FOR one, have found myself much refreshed in reading favourite books in new editions. They come in that manner with a delightful freshness to the mind, and even what has seemed dead and withered is renewed again.

### *When to Throw up the Hands.*

THE practice of reading is only in its infancy. Even amongst educated and rich people there is practically no reading as a rule, except it be the occasional resort to newspapers, magazines, and novels, when the time cannot be well passed otherwise. I will give you a sure test. When you are shown into a drawing-room you can tell immediately whether or not the people in the house have the smallest care for reading. Suppose you have to wait in the drawing-room and find absolutely nothing that you can look at by any possibility, nothing that will help

you to get through the time, then you are in an illiterate household, no matter what schools or colleges the occupants may have attended. If you see nothing but large quartos entitled *Picturesque America* and the like, you may throw up your hands and give over hoping.

*Two Hours a Day.*

IF you can give two hours a day to reading—and young people who do not want too much rest might easily, if they had a mind, get an hour in the morning and an hour at night—you can read a hundred and four books a year. If holidays are judiciously used, this number will be larger. Anyone who reads that number of books in a year is a very exceptional person. You will hardly meet him or her anywhere you go, even amongst what are called literary persons.

*The Right Binding.*

I VERY seldom see a volume whose binding gives me true satisfaction.

*The Great English Letter-writers.*

THE greatest English letter-writers are William Cowper, Charles Lamb, Edward FitzGerald, Robert Louis Stevenson, and, so far as personal liking is concerned, I should add James Smetham and Thomas Davidson. It does not require much argument to show that all these were in a manner mortally wounded.

Cowper certainly was. The tragedies of Lamb's life pierced his heart. Edward FitzGerald might seem to be an exception, but he certainly was not.

As for Stevenson, I need say nothing. Smetham's melancholy end is mentioned by his biographer. As for Davidson, he did not live quite thirty-two years, and some four of these he had to pass in the declining stages of consumption. But no one will say that the letters of Cowper, FitzGerald, Stevenson, Smetham, and Davidson would have been what they are if their lives had been granted even the ordinary measure of health and sunshine and activity.

The disabled can afford to put their whole intellectual force into writing. They have leisure. In some cases their letters are almost more than themselves. They have the glow and essence of the individual.

### *The Right Relations.*

THE great readers of the world have begun very early. To realise in a great degree the delights of reading, one should be able to contrive the circumstances of his birth. He should, if possible, arrange to be related to a bookseller, or at the very least a devoted bookman. Two of the greatest among our men of letters practically owed everything to their connections with booksellers. Dr. Johnson was unquestionably the first of English men of letters in the eighteenth century, and Lord Macaulay the first in the nineteenth century.

*Opening your Eyes.*

IF you can see nothing in a great writer, make up your mind that this is your blindness, and go on until you see. Take one great writer each year, and give him your spare hours in the winter until you come to know his heart. Unless a man does this, he is sure to become narrow and stereotyped.

*About Ten.*

THE true bookman must begin about ten, and must be brought up amongst books. If he starts later he is probably taken up with routine studies, and even if he recovers himself and reads with a will and becomes a critic, he cannot recover the lost ground. He is led astray by what is facetiously called "contemporary literature," and has not time for what is really enriching.

*Learning to Read.*

WE may have our individual likings, but we are wrong unless we know at least one lord—one lord of the imagination. It is a great thing to be thoroughly and intimately familiar with even one lord of the imagination. "How are we to know," say some people, "who are the great authors?" There are those who cannot read Scott or Dickens; but there is a way of knowing.

Everyone is ennobled by an intimate knowledge of the mind of a really great author, and to fall in love with

a great author, and to remain in love with him, is one of life's chief blessings.

You ought to have three kinds of books. There is a verse in one of the Psalms : " Lover and friend hast Thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into the darkness." Lover, friend, acquaintance. Your individuality is the centre, round it and near it is the little circle of love—those who are your nearest and dearest. Round that is a larger concentric circle of friends, and then round that is a very large circle of acquaintances. All the people you know are lovers, friends, and acquaintances. I say the same thing about books. Certain books you love, and they are the special books, the books you want to read every year, the books you would not be without, the books which you bind in morocco, the books you would keep at all costs. Find the books that you love, and then find your friends among books. By friends I mean excellent books, though not the books that appeal most immediately and sharply. I love Boswell's *Life of Johnson* ; Lockhart's *Life of Scott* is my friend.

Your mental life will be determined by your lovers and your friends ; but if you have lovers and friends, there is no reason why you should not have a great number of acquaintances. A public man said recently that he had 4,000 acquaintances, and one may certainly know 4,000 books. In the world of books, it is essential to have acquaintances, if it were only for this—that the acquaintanceships help us to appreciate our lovers and our friends.

*Are you Fond?*

MANY of those who love books best have no impulse to produce, and as a matter of fact never write anything. There is a simple and easy test as to whether you are fond of reading or not. Have you always time for it? Would you not rather give up your meals than give up your books? How few people can honestly say they would—and yet there are a few! I have known people miserable in long railway journeys for want of food and for want of tobacco, but I have scarcely known anyone who was miserable simply for lack of a book. When there is this genuine passion for reading you never hear talk about time. The time makes itself. It may always be found. I do not wish anybody to believe the final cause of things is writing and reading, and yet I cannot help thinking that the taste for books is one to be vehemently encouraged. Even in the greatest calamities of life it is a source and a stay. It comes into darkness too thick to admit even the truest friends. It makes you comparatively independent of circumstances. However remote from society you may be, however cheerless your environment, there is still a great solace which prevents the hours from becoming dull. Besides, it has a wonderful effect in raising the mind above narrowing and belittling surroundings. How mean, how poor, how stunted the mind may grow in the country apart from congenial and stimulating society! How trivial grows the conversation, such of it as there is! But the lover of



books moves habitually in a wider world. His mind is continually refreshed ; it does not become a mere arid desert. He is kept thinking, and he is able to tell you his thoughts. He has an escape from the poverty round about him. And yet I believe that the number of readers is very, very small. A good man will make time to read at least two books every week, one old and the other new. Of course, in favourable circumstances he will do much better than that ; but this will be his minimum. A word should be said in compassion of critics. When you have to read new books in order to criticise them, a great deal of the pleasure is taken away, and the only chance for you is to keep reading old books alongside the new. You may be sure "the old is better." I had recently to read and review seven novels in one week. During the same week I got through *The Newcomes* again, and escaped without perceptible demoralisation.

#### *A Good Library.*

HOW many books go to make a good library ? I think a very satisfactory library might be made out of 6,000 volumes. Six thousand volumes should be sufficient, even if the owner is a specialist, as he ought to be in one department, and has a thousand books on his own particular subject. It is not pleasant to think of shifting one's library, but if I had to do it I think I should be satisfied with 6,000 books, and leave the rest behind. The longer one lives the more clearly one perceives that the great books of literature

are those that ought to be preserved for us. One gets more thought, more suggestion, more quickening from a sixth perusal of *The Newcomes* than from reading for the first time the best six novels of the present season. At a watering-place not long ago I had a riot of reading new books, but *The Fortunes of Nigel*, read, I suppose, for the twentieth time, gave me more than all the rest. So it is quite safe to get rid of all second-rate books, especially stories, of second-rate books in all departments, except, perhaps, biography. I am always most reluctant to part with a biography. There are 3,000 volumes of biography in my library, and I may safely say that I have learned something from every one of them. It is hardly possible to write a totally worthless book about a human life. Poetry, also, I never like to part with, but most of history, most books of science, most encyclopædias and dictionaries become superseded, and may be left behind without one tear or pang.

*The Rate of Reading.*

THE vast majority read an ordinary story at the rate of from 8,000 to 9,000 words in half an hour. Some fall considerably below this, as low as 4,000 words in half an hour. Others again go slightly above it, but in no case have I had more than 12,000 words mentioned. I have made various personal experiments, and find that I can read, where there is no occasion for halting, about 20,000 words in half an hour. Last night I tried with Shirley

Brooks's *Sooner or Later*, and read faster than that, but as I know the book very well, the experiment was scarcely a fair one. Dialect books one reads more slowly.

*The Books on the Rug.*

SOUND bookmen always have three or four books on hand at a time. The idea that you should read one book at a time is the idea of those people who think you should dine upon one dish. You go up to your study after dinner and commence reading. There should be at least three books, four are better, awaiting you on the rug. You might begin with a little bit of biography or criticism. Then you should proceed to the book that is really furnishing you with thoughts, of whatever kind it may be. Then you should have in reserve a book of fiction, with which you may close the evening pleasantly. I like, for my part, every night to read, as a last thing, some poetry.

*The Dear City of Books.*

I KNOW there is much said about courses of reading, but those who go in for courses of reading very seldom care for reading itself, and though they may find their reading useful in the way of business advancement, they do not build for themselves the dear city of books.

*Some in Vellum.*

THE man of modest means should be very careful not to cultivate fine bindings. I know the allurements of

“ Red morocco’s gilded gleam  
And vellum rich as country cream.”

But it is a perilous taste. We are entitled to something perhaps. We should have a few books that are not quite common, a few books which friends might regard with envy. I think also we should have a few good bindings, not too many, but some—some in vellum stamped with gold, a few Elzevir classics.

*The Lucky Reader.*

THERE are readers who have the rare good fortune of becoming enamoured at once with what is really fine and lasting. I knew one reader who was born into the kingdom of literature by accidentally perusing *Esmond*, and another who entered through the gate of *Adam Bede*. When the enchanted ground has been trodden, then I should advise readers in general to go on until they master the complete writings and the biography of the author whom they love. It is an extraordinary advance in mental progress to become on terms of intimacy with a first-rate mind.

## ANTHOLOGIES

### *Fresh Sources.*

I NEED hardly say that the selection should be made without any reference to, and, if possible, without any knowledge of, other selections. This is the only hope for an anthology in these days where they have been so much multiplied, and are nearly all so very bad, so very stale, so very ignorant and stupid.

### *E. V. L.*

MR. LUCAS seems to me the king of living anthologists. Others may have read as much.

### *E. V. L. again.*

MR. LUCAS has a very light hand, but he never descends to pure fatuity. He charms us by his happy illustrations, and especially by his quotations. One feels that he should be employed as Condenser-in-Chief to the British Empire. He can take any book, and, as if by magic, point out what in it is worthy to live, provided it contains anything of that sort.

*Dr. Johnson.*

OF all great writers, he was the one who cared least for writing. On almost every occasion he wrote from compulsion, or, as he said himself, he supplied the necessities of the hour that was passing over. He would not allow that there was any pleasure in writing, or that there might be pleasure from writing after it was over. If he had been a rich man we should have probably had nothing from him except a few poems. He expressed himself best and most truly and most happily in conversation. He found his Boswell, and so we know him for what he was—great in intellect, greater still in heart, never losing his fortitude amid the sorest anxieties and the heaviest distresses, one for whom his well-grounded hope that he might be “remembered among the writers who have given ardour to virtue and confidence to truth” has been fulfilled.

*Goethe.*

I REREAD much of *Goethe*. I did not admire more, simply because that was not possible, but all the old reverence and gratitude returned. Will it not be said at the end of the new century that the greatest writer of our century, the greatest beyond comparison, was Goethe?

## THE BRONTËS

*Charlotte.*

### I

SHE found in her Brussels teacher, not a man whom she fell in love with, but a man whom she might have loved. But though her heart was hot with the dream, she came back to the stifling cares and burdens of Haworth, and in all points anxiously fulfilled her duty as a clergyman's daughter. Shy, demure, reserved, punctilious—all this she was to her neighbours, and nothing beyond.

But when we read her books, we see that her dream life was utterly different. Her heroines are all of them, to use Rousseau's phrase, "children of Melchizedek." They are orphans, free to take their own course, free to work, and to find, if it may be, the glory of love. When love comes they have no tyrannical relatives to consult; the world has no claims upon them. For Charlotte Brontë the ideal life was that of a man and woman who chose each other from all the world, and were sufficient to one another, fearing no man's frown, asking no man's favour. She did not despise the adornments of existence, but the heart of life was love. When we consider the chains which held her fast to duty, through her darkened and anxious years, with the perfect freedom which she allows to the

children of her imagination, we cannot but feel that in many ways Charlotte Brontë's life was a true tragedy.

*Charlotte.*

II

LET it be remembered that till Miss Brontë met M. Héger she had probably never known a gentleman. Her father had good qualities, but in many ways he was a savage. Her brother became a monster, and his associates seem to have been no better than himself. Among her neighbours she was familiar with rough tempers and harsh judgments. There was little or nothing of the amenity and the courtesy of life. To Miss Brontë, M. Héger represented the world of intelligence and culture and sympathy. She believed that she saw in him something really noble and high-principled. Her heart awakened, and her mind with it. There had been but little joy in her years, no sweetness of spring, no budding of leaf or flower. Even as a girl she was without hope. From the pleasure, the bustle, the splendour, the gaiety of life she thought herself utterly excluded. It is not so much her devotion that surprises one as its extraordinary persistency. We can see that it lasted to the end. It is dominant in nearly all her writings. We have glimpses of the misery in which she wrote *Villette*. When she came back from Brussels she called herself "grey and very old" and it is too clear that her memories came by degrees to be sad rather than happy. Towards the end of her life, when she



sat alone hearing the voices of the dead speaking through the storm-winds, she was haunted by the thought of one divided, though not by death. She was so intense that she could not change. Her life of strange eternal calm gave her leisure to brood. Her acute brain and vivid imagination stamped whatever she saw or experienced on the brain, and gave significance to every encounter with life. How strange is the contrast between her narrow, silent, remote home, between her little journeys within the range of the one village conveyance, between her short, sad experiences of governess life and the extraordinary fullness, imagination, and fire of her writings !

M. Héger need not have been afraid. He might have trusted his correspondent. No one was ever more grandly faithful to her primary duties than Charlotte Brontë.

*Emily with Anne.*

I HAVE before me Emily Brontë's own copy of *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*. Never in all literature was any coupling of books so incongruous.

*Emily.*

*W*UTHERING HEIGHTS is from beginning to end a pure and purifying tragedy. It excels in its pictures of dreamland and delirium. The writer is most secure when she is treading the path of a single hair.

Charlotte : “ *Shirley* ” and “ *The Professor* .”

THE *novel* that gave me most pleasure was *Shirley*. I know there are greater novels—perhaps many. *Clarissa Harlowe* is greater ; some of Scott’s are ; and there are others. But for the happiness I have had in reading it, I put it first. It is the novel for young people. The *scene* I choose is the proposal to Frances Evans Henri in *The Professor*. There are finer scenes—many of them. I see very well that Jeanie Dean’s interview with the Queen, and a certain chapter in *Clarissa*, are a world beyond it. Nevertheless——

R. L. S.

*The Unsentimental.*

IT is Mr. Stevenson's reasoned theory that the whole sweetness of life can only be tasted by the irresponsible. But reluctantly allowing that love and marriage will come in, he has to take the best of them, and so we have Catriona and Barbara Grant.

*His Ruling Passion.*

MR. HENRY JAMES, if we remember rightly, thinks that Mr. Stevenson is pre-eminently a lover of youth and heroism. We do not believe it. With him, adventure comes first, and that implies a complete indifference to the windy ways of men. You go forth without baggage, in contempt of correspondents, and take things with infinite gusto as they come.

*An Eye for Cupboards.*

STEVENSON, with all his amiability, had a distinct eye for cupboards, and loved to set the skeletons rattling.

*Playing on Words.*

STEVENSON made it his life-work to perfect the instrument of style. He began as a boy to live with words. He did not so much wish to be an author as to be able to write, to play words like a fiddle.

*In Collaboration.*

IT is impossible to deny that he has of late given his admirers sound cause for much discontent. What could be more unhappy than his association with Mr. Lloyd Osbourne? Where we had Osbourne chiefly, the little bits of Stevenson were like the flashes of fireflies over a hopeless swamp; where Stevenson predominated, we had always an uneasy feeling that Osbourne might suddenly begin and spoil everything. Mr. Lloyd Osbourne is a goodly youth, doubtless; we should like to hear that he was appointed King of Samoa, and working sixteen hours a day on a new constitution for that vexed country.

*Abbotsford and Vailima.*

IS it not plain that the tragedy of Abbotsford was repeated at Samoa, and with similar results? Stevenson had a considerable income, but he spent profusely, and was sometimes tortured with anxiety. He died, as it seems, before his time. He died at the period when his powers were fully matured, and he was doing his best work. But though he was no lover of death, he had met him at close quarters, and had not feared him. For all his occasional wayward-

ness and exuberance, Stevenson was a man of men—grave and valiant and tender.

*His Mood.*

IT was remarked of a great English theologian that the experience of bereavement brought home to him in an overpowering way the equality caused by death. This was Stevenson's mood. He looked upon men without envy, without undue pity, with great tolerance, with steady kindness. They were dying, all of them, and he was to die sooner than most of them. Though capable at times of a fine anger, he was not much moved by personal wrongs. The beauty and the pitifulness of human affection touched him more deeply than anything else, so deeply that he spoke not much of it.

*"Kidnapped."*

IT is true that *Kidnapped*, save for the first few pages, might be mistaken for the work of Scott at its best.

*Golden Glass.*

SCOTT would have enjoyed with a generous delight Mr. Stevenson's phrases, but we cannot imagine him trying to imitate them. The pure gold of style is transparent glass. It is when, as in *Kidnapped*, the current of Mr. Stevenson's story flows clearest that his writing best deserves to be called unaffected, enduring, and true.

"*The Ebb Tide.*"

**T**HE *EBB TIDE* is anything but a classic work. It is hasty, sketchy, melodramatic, and sordid in its subject—in other words, it is a mere pot-boiler. Why should Mr. Stevenson need to have such an immense fire to boil his pot, a fire so fierce that while it warms his food it consumes his reputation?

"*The New Arabian Nights.*"

**I**T is difficult to believe that he ever surpassed that incomparable work, *The New Arabian Nights*. Those who read that book with its appendices saw that his powers were as various as they were great, and anticipated for him a career even higher than that which he achieved. Still he had not impressed the public. It would be curious to know how *The New Arabian Nights* fared with the booksellers. At the time when his reputation stood high with lovers of literature, he was glad to write for very moderate prices.

"*Prince Otto.*"

**I**T has been maintained by at least one very eminent critic that *Prince Otto* is the best of Stevenson's books. I well remember its appearance, and while the fumes of chloral seemed to be about it, it stood out very distinctly among the books of its day.

## THE SMALL BAND OF POETS

*Dear Sidney Dobell.*

WE feel something like a personal gratitude towards Mr. Walter Scott for issuing in shilling volume the selections from the poems of dear Sidney Dobell. No great writer of the Victorian period is so little known and understood. He was by far the greatest man of the spasmodic school, a greater genius than Bailey, Gilfillan, or Alexander Smith.

*Francis Thompson.*

### I

HE worked for the Academy and seems to have done his best. Mr. Lewis Hind says that every one of his articles gave distinction to the issue in which it appeared. Once or twice the old flame of his old poetic fire blazed out. He took any work that was offered him, but found life very hard. He was a generous critic, but contemporary literature did not strongly attract him. He was often ill and cold and lonely. He left nothing at all behind him when he died, saving a very few books and some rubbish. He was oppressed by heavy melancholy, and he found small pleasure in society. He was very poor, and had to take money from Mr. Meynell.

*Francis Thompson.*

II

THUS the years went on somewhat wearily, though Thompson could hardly be unconscious of his growing fame. His health dismayed him, and the laudanum habit seems to have grown. "He continued to have friends who would have done anything for him, but his earthly life was drawing to an end. "When I last saw him he took my father's hand and kept it within his own, chafing and patting it as if to make a last farewell." He died at dawn on November 13, 1907. In his coffin were roses from Meredith's garden inscribed with Meredith's testimony, "A true poet ; one of the small band."

*The Poet's Difficulty.*

THE poet is compelled to devote himself to journalism, and even to attempt the novel. Poets make very good journalists sometimes, but as a rule they dislike the business. As writers of fiction, they very seldom achieve success. It is very hard to see what can be done to help them. As a rule, the popular magazines do not nowadays care for poetry. A man like Mr. Kipling can get a good price for a set of verses, but that is mainly for the sake of having his name on the cover ; and even Kipling has found that to bring out a new volume of poems that will bear criticism is a very difficult matter. I am inclined to think that in future for poetry we must look not to literary men by profession, but to those engaged in the ordinary work of the world.



*On Wordsworth.*

WHAT is weak in Wordsworth is that he did not oftener reject, and that in many places he kept on writing when passion had grown cold.

*Robert Browning.*

WHAT Mr. Chesterton did for Browning's life, Professor Griffin did to a certain extent for his work, and with the two volumes in hand the mystery of Browning is largely cleared away. Not quite, for Browning was a rich, deep, and complex nature, not easily to be read or accounted for. But, after all, even the humblest keep certain secrets well ; and it may be said that we understand Browning at least as well as he ever meant us to understand him.

*About "Love in a Valley."*

TENNYSON read the lines in the *Critic*, and said he could not get them out of his head, such was their magical music and melody. The poem, in fact, has its sure place in the golden scriptures of love. It should be reprinted in its original form with the lines which Meredith added after publication, but never gave to the public.

*A Poet's Bible.*

THERE is still a vast quantity of meritorious fugitive verse about the world, but the authors apparently never think of collecting it. If I were to

get a commission from the publishers to prepare a "Poet's Bible" I should begin by examining the file of *The Atlantic Monthly*.

*Thomas Hardy.*

MR. HARDY exercises the privilege of a master by building much of his poetry with rough-hewn stones, which somehow he covers with glamour if he does not mould them into beauty. On this subject the best criticism I have seen was by E. V. Lucas in *The Academy*, and it ought to be reprinted. How gloriously did Hardy contradict himself when the war broke out, when he expressed himself a believer in the doom of cowards and the triumph of justice? In his case wisdom has been justified of her child.

*Keats.*

SIR SIDNEY COLVIN has done the final book on Keats.

## THE STORY-TELLERS

*Leonard Merrick.*

IT has been said that he knows to the quick what poverty may mean, and how it may divide two who are at heart loyal to one another. In *When Love Flies Out of the Window* the end is happy, but it is not the end.

For Mr. Merrick life is always chequered and the shadow follows the light.

It is astonishing that a talent so fine and true and rare as that of Mr. Merrick has been so inadequately recognised in this country.

*Conan Doyle.*

HE is a born story-teller—a business-like craftsman who knows that a story to tell is the main thing, and who, when he gets his story, never bungles it in telling. He is also a laborious student, massing details easily. Still, when I hear his books spoken of in the same breath as *Ivanhoe*, I shudder at the blasphemy. Without wishing to infringe the law of libel, nay, speaking with hearty admiration and goodwill, I venture to say that Dr. Doyle has Notebooks concealed about his person or premises. • Where is the Notebook for *Ivanhoe*? When you find it you will dis-

cover the song the sirens sang, and the name Achilles bore when he hid himself among women.

*A Knack.*

WE may be certain that a born story-teller will command a public. "Tell me a story" is the child's demand, and it persists to the end. The power of telling stories, the Scheherazade power, is a knack rather than a gift. It is innate, not acquired. It can never be taught. It may succeed along with extreme stupidity and incredible ignorance. The person who possesses it may have no culture, no true intelligence of life, no refinement, no depth of feeling. But he or she may be able to interest, to tell a tale which has a beginning, a middle, and an end, which you wish to hear out; hearing which, you ignore what is passing round you. A story-teller of this kind can keep his head safe for at least a thousand and one nights.

*An Immortal Book.*

I FULLY grant that for fiction of the first class the gift of story-telling is an absolute necessity. Nothing will make up for the want of it. In this field, humour, and passion, and observation, and learning have exhausted themselves in vain, because they were unaided by the story-teller's special talent, the talent for making a plot, for creating an overpowering interest in the narrative. For success, a novelist must be able to cover and surround the reader with

the story. Unless he can do this, everything seems to slip through the reader's fingers, and the book is merely a quarry from which people may steal with comparative impunity. And yet the mere art of story-telling is not enough. It may win immense temporary popularity, but it does not confer immortality. In all the immortal books there are what someone calls touches of blood and of the Old Night, revelations of the inner secrets, and the last experiences of the soul.

*Sinclair Lewis and America.*

HE said that in little towns there are representatives of almost every denomination, with handfuls in attendance at the services and very meagre resources. Mr. Lewis expressed himself as most favourable to Church Union. In fact, one could see that *Main Street* was the exposition in a guarded way of his own deepest beliefs.

*The Capacity of the Story Teller.*

I

THE public will go on buying and reading for a long time, even when he comes to tell the same stories over again. The hour strikes for him, however, when they become thoroughly awake to the fact that he is telling the same stories over again. I should say that he may quite safely tell all his stories thrice. I doubt whether he may tell them four times.

## II

WHAT books of our time will be alive, say, a hundred years after this? I think a fair number will bear the sifting of the years. John Buchan has written at least two yarns of the very first class, I mean *Greenmantle* and *The Thirty-nine Steps*. Some excellent work has been done by others, chief among such is *The Black Gang*, by "Sapper" (H. C. McNeile). It grows in strength, urgency, and splendid interest to the very last page. I have seldom been so much excited in reading a book as when I closed *The Black Gang*.

*Henry Seton Merriman.*

WHEN we lost Merriman, we perhaps scarcely understood how much we lost. His shrewd, quiet accomplishments did not dazzle at first, but his books will bear to be read over and over. They are true, they are beautiful, they are noble; they reflect a personality as strong and tender as themselves.

*An Old Story.*

LEITCH RITCHIE was no mean writer. There is a quiet beauty about his story, *Wearyfoot Common*, which takes one back to it again and again.

*Charles Garvice.*

WHAT was the secret of his popularity? He had the gift of narrative. He could make a plot and he could tell a story. I have heard men of

infinitely more literary prestige openly regret that the power of weaving a plot was not theirs in its fullness. I doubt whether Dickens was ever completely master of a plot. He certainly never came near Wilkie Collins when Collins was at his best.

*Great Eyes and Red Hair.*

I WISH to call attention to Miss Ethel Dell's insatiable love of corporal punishment. It is flogging that she most admires. Her characters go into great whirlwinds of passions. Some of them have great eyes and red hair. These attractive persons go straight to battle.

*Hugh Walpole.*

I

I REGRET that he should vex himself so much about the refusal of the English people to buy books. The truth is, they buy a good many books, and they cannot be scolded into buying more, but they may be conciliated.

II

*"The Secret City."*

THE chief impression left is that of something gloomy and ominous. What is to be done with the Russian people? What is to happen when a hundred million of these children—ignorant, greedy, pathetic, helpless, revengeful—are let loose upon the world? Where are their leaders? Who will be their leaders? There comes no reply.

*Mrs. Alfred Sidgwick.*

MRS. SIDGWICK is one of our most cultured novelists. Her taste is nearly infallible, and her knowledge and insight are of the first order. She has not achieved the success that might have been looked for, however, and I think the reason is a want of imagination and uplift and progress in her books. They are interesting and in many ways admirable, but I do not think they make you catch your breath at any point.

*Frederick Niven.*

LOVERS of good literature know Frederick Niven and his work. I have never read a book of his without instruction and delight. He can draw a character and he can tell a story, but I think he is most successful in describing the effect of environment on the living soul. He is extraordinarily correct and careful in dealing with the facts that make up environment, and in assigning their relative importance.

*E. F. Benson.*

I HAVE a kindness for Mr. Benson, and earnestly implore him to consider that there is a difference between silly talk and wise talk.



## ESTIMATES

*Lord Milner.*

HE had more charm than any man we ever met, except perhaps Henry Drummond.

*R. W. Gilder.*

MR. GILDER was one of the best men in America.

*Frederic Harrison.*

HE was a sturdy writer with a strong style, a first-rate journalist even to the last. I should not put him in the very first rank as a stylist, but he had a style. He had not the music and the melancholy of writers like Lord Morley and Goldwin Smith and Lord Rosebery, but he had an athletic clearness which none of them surpassed.

*In 1909.*

AMONG the writers of the present time we should divide the prize for lucidity between Dr. Griffith Thomas and Mr. Hubert Bland. Their subjects are not the same, but in the matter of treatment each is as clear as spring water.

*The "Spectator."*

GRADUALLY Messrs. Hutton and Townsend considerably altered the character of the paper. They discarded news and parliamentary reports, gave a chronicle of the week, and made the rest of the paper articles and reviews. They did far more than this. They shot their individuality through every part of it. Two such rich and complex personalities have perhaps never been associated with any paper, and the singular accordance of their views turned their union to the best possible account. But undoubtedly the first great change was the introduction of the religious element. This was done pronouncedly. Books in particular were reviewed from the ethical and religious standpoint. And the same principle was applied to politics. In fact, at one time Frederick Maurice had a department of *The Spectator* all to himself. Journalists often forget that they are writing for a baptized people, but the editors of *The Spectator* did not, and have had their reward.

*Chesterton the Promising.*

MR. CHESTERTON I have marked from the first, and I think I put him in type as soon as any editor did. On the whole, he has fulfilled my expectations. At all events, I am as sure as I ever was that he is a very powerful, brilliant, brave, and honest man ; but he has not yet written a book by which he will live.

"*Very, very great.*"

WHEN all is said and done, I do believe that Dickens and Thackeray were very, very great, and the sense of their greatness is deepened in my mind by every fresh perusal of their books. There can be little doubt that many of their contemporaries did not know how to estimate them. Dickens, in particular, suffered much from the superfine. There are criticisms of *Little Dorrit* which it is impossible even at this time of day to read without a kind of fury. It does not matter. Dickens and Thackeray were supermen.

*Kipling and Scott.*

HE cannot tread softly the paths that lead up to the inner chamber of the mind, for he does not know them. Nor does he ever stand behind his effects. In the highest style of power the personality sinks and fades ; Mr. Kipling signs his stories top and bottom and all through. There is an unending sparkle and crackle through Mr. Kipling's pages ; Scott's great passages rise from the level as noiselessly as a mountain.

*Walter Bagehot.*

I HAD the honour of making a selection from the leaders which he contributed week by week to *The Economist* for many years. I venture to think

that the book is even more full of calm political wisdom than the others that bear his name. These are more brilliant and more complete.

*George Meredith.*

WITH all his great gifts he is, more than any other, menaced by the lethal saying of Dr. Johnson, "Nothing odd will last."

*Anthony Trollope.*

HIS novels, strange to say, are not much read nowadays. They will, however, be revived—the best of them, at least. I shall always be grateful for the pleasure I had out of them during two or three years of specially hard work. At that time I could only give a limited portion of each day to light reading and I wanted something interesting and not too exciting. Trollope just suited me. I looked forward without eagerness, but with pleasant anticipation, to the hour for taking him up, and was rarely disappointed. I read everything, but the Barchester novels were my favourites, especially, perhaps, *Dr. Thorne*. The political novels are by no means bad, but they become tedious. *Orley Farm* and *The Small House at Allington* are full of interest, and *An Editor's Tales* gave sufficient proof that Trollope could write short stories. What Trollope could not do was editing. I have a set of his *St. Paul's Magazine*.

*On Liking "Lavengro."*

I ADMIT that *Lavengro* is not everybody's book. In order to appreciate it there must be a largeness of mind and a width of sympathy that are not very common. To appreciate it in the right way is a certificate of character. No one can be dull or stupid or narrow who revels in *Lavengro*.

*Thackeray.*

I READ over again *Vanity Fair* after an interval of at least ten years. This time I was much more impressed by its cynicism.

*"Aurora Leigh."*

AURORA LEIGH I have ever regarded as a touchstone. I do not mean that those who fail to admire it or who disapprove of it are bad judges of literature. I mean that those who like it are always catholic in their tastes, and not tied to the dogmas of any school or faction.

*Difficulties.*

IT is impossible to tell under what circumstances a man's literary power is best developed. For example, who will undertake to decide whether Fitzgerald would have done more or less if he had lived a different life? As it was, he did his version of Omar, his letters, his translations, and paraphrases, and his dialogues. Would his delicate genius have

survived the tear and wear of life? He would not have given us what he has given, and on the whole perhaps we should prefer to keep what we have. In Scott's conditions Stevenson might have done as great a work as Scott, but it would not have been the work with which he has enriched us for ever. But to understand Stevenson fully, one must first spit a little blood.

## BROODINGS ON BIOGRAPHY

*Alice Meynell.*

ONCE we remember pressing her to collect her little books into one large book, but she replied with unaffected frankness that she had a horror of large books.

*The Barriers of Reserve.*

SUPPOSE one were commissioned to write his autobiography, he would rummage his papers for the most remarkable letters in his possession ; he would try to recall the most interesting men he had met, and the things they said ; he would think over the small successes he had gained, and put the best face on everything, and so a book might be written without a vital line. But say to him, "Write what you do not have to search your memory or your cupboards for ; write the things that are vivid and burning in your heart ; the things you think about when you are alone or awake at night." There is perhaps not one man in a generation who would obey, and yet all who obeyed would be secure of immortality—of a certain sort.

*A Biographer's Duty.*

A BIOGRAPHER is a literary man, not a scientific man. His business is to select. He may indeed carry the selective principle too far, and write a book that contains as little as Tomline's *Life of Pitt* ; but if the choice had to be made, I had rather be the author of Tomline's *Life of Pitt* than the author of Froude's *Life of Carlyle*.

*Written in 1895.*

I VENTURE to predict with some confidence that not one of the recent books of this kind will survive. I might almost go further, and say that no part of any one of them will survive. Why is this ? Partly because the writers have neglected to keep journals. Contemporary notes, and these only, can be trusted. You cannot give the gist of a conversation ten years after it has taken place. I doubt whether there is anything that will secure immortality save Boswellising ; that is, you must take notes at the time, and you must not only have a Boswell to write, you must have a Dr. Johnson to speak.

*Material.*

## I

NO really satisfactory memoir can be written without letters or diaries. In reading biographies I long to hear the subject speak for himself.



II

IT would be a great comfort if the writers of big biographies would give us at the beginning a list of the main events and their dates.

*Musings.*

I

Nobody can get biographical material about lexicographers.

II

THERE is a point at which fine writing ceases to be desirable, and this point is soon reached in biographies.

*Often Pondered.*

NO life fascinates me more than that of Leonardo da Vinci. I often gaze at the portrait of him prefixed to Mr. Hamerton's *Intellectual Life*.

*First and Last?*

THE first good biography of a man of letters was written by Boswell, and I am not sure that it would not be right to say that the last was written by Boswell.

*The Best Letters.*

THE very best letters I know are those of Cowper to Lady Hesketh, and of Fitzgerald to Fanny Kemble.

*Great Biographies.*

A GOOD many years ago that indefatigable and learned reader, Professor Saintsbury, gave a list of the great biographies. He included the following books :

1. Lockhart's *Scott*.
2. Boswell's *Johnson*.
3. Moore's *Byron*.
4. Carlyle's *Sterling*.
5. Sir George Trevelyan's *Macaulay*.

I venture to think that two of these must be rejected. Moore's *Life of Byron* is one. It is undoubtedly an entertaining book, and, when the immense difficulties of the task are considered, it must be admitted that Moore displayed considerable tact and skill. Dr. Richard Garnett used to maintain that Moore was a great man of letters who had never been sufficiently recognised. Professor Saintsbury is of the same opinion, and it cannot be questioned that Moore was ready and clever. But time has judged him. Most of his verse is forgotten, and his prose, with the exception of the *Life of Byron*, is dead. Dr. Saintsbury and a few others may know his contributions to *The Edinburgh Review*, and his *Epicurean*, his *Life of Sheridan*, and conceivably his translation (in part) of *Sallust*. But this knowledge is confined to a few lonely students. I could wish that Moore had written the *Life of Sydney Smith*, as he meant to do ; but this purpose was frustrated by death. Besides, Byron was not a great man. Macaulay's judgment will never be

reversed. He was "a bad fellow, and horribly affected." No doubt he was an excellent letter-writer, but his letters have never found their way to the general heart.

"*The Life of Sterling.*"

NOR should I admit the claims of Carlyle's *Life of Sterling*. It is a wonderful book, the most pleasing of all Carlyle's works. No praise could be too high for the general management of the memoir, and the felicity of many passages. But it deals with a hopelessly second-rate man. Those who have read Julius Hare's *Memoir* and the writings which follow it cannot but be amazed at the impression Sterling produced. The banality of his verses can hardly be imagined by those who have not examined them. He was a tolerable critic, and a man of undeniable personal charm. But when we have said this we have said all. Carlyle could take some praising, but I think he would have smiled if anyone had called his *Life of Sterling* a great biographical classic. It is, however, infinitely superior to his *Life of Schiller*, a piece of journeyman's work, and I read with amazement in a recent book by a critic of authority a pronouncement in which Carlyle's *Lives of Schiller and Sterling* were put on the same level.

*How to Write One.*

A GREAT biography must be the work of a man with the biographical faculty. I have carefully abstained from saying that the writer of a great

biography must himself be great. It may be doubted whether any really great writer has ever written a great biography. But the biographical talent is special. The true biographer must be able to handle his materials. He must have the power of passing them through his mind and transmuting them into a unity. He must know how to complete the portrait touch by touch. He must avoid all that is irrelevant, and omit nothing that is relevant. He must have an eye for the critical moments in life. He must know the people who enter into the heart and the thought and the action of his subject, and be able to describe and discriminate their influence. He must also be in possession of a good narrative style, and this means that he must write with zest. The connecting passages must be very carefully and skilfully done, even when the material is of surpassing interest.

*The Best-loved Shelves.*

BIOGRAPHY is my favourite form of reading, and I have beside me in the room where I am writing at least four thousand biographical works. Was it not Keble's father who said "All sermons are good?" In the same manner I might say all biographies are good. Never yet have I seen a biography which did not contain something.

*The Key to Lockhart.*

IT happens sometimes that men whose literary skill is not remarkable have the biographical gift. If you wish to understand the life of Walter Scott,

you, must read the little book about him by the Rev. G. R. Gleig. It is a kind of key to Lockhart.

*The Truest.*

PERHAPS the truest autobiographies are those which do not take the prescribed form—which are indirect. Very few people have the courage to tell the true story of their lives. There is a noble modesty of the soul which makes it impossible to draw the veil, back which hides from the world its hopes and its joys, its losses and wounds and sacrifices, the struggles, the victories and the defeats of conscience. An autobiography may be true as far as it goes, but unless it admits the reader into the sanctuary of life it makes no impression.

I often turn to Charles Lamb's little sketch of himself, and find more in it than in Canon Ainger, or Mr. Procter, or Mr. FitzGerald, or Thomas Westwood.

We can often, if we read wisely, find out what came true in dream, what was so dear and so cherished that the dull grey world of fact was as nothing in comparison.

*Carlyle and Tennyson.*

THERE are a few men of genius who are always men of genius. Whatever they write or whatever they say has upon it some distinctive touch. Carlyle, especially, was one of this kind. When he wrote a letter he never wrote in a commonplace way,

and he often wrote up to his very highest without effort and without consciousness. Every scrap of his, one might say, is worthy to be preserved. It was the same with his talk—talk the main sentiments of which were repeated and repeated, but of which the expression was ever new and memorable. What books Carlyle has left unwritten ! Perhaps, indeed, he never found his true way in literature, for although he was a laborious investigator, yet he did best in a book like the *Life of Sterling*, written straight from the deep fountains of genius. Tennyson did not love letter-writing, and left that business mainly to his wife. He was an excellent writer of prose, but we do not think one of the letters printed in this biography will live in the memory.

*To the would-be Author.*

PERHAPS the ordinary reminiscent should be satisfied with a short period of popularity. I cannot think at present of any book of reminiscences which has been received into the number of permanent books. Nor is this to be wondered at when the requirements I have faintly indicated are considered. It is not so easy to combine a large experience, a good memory, and a serene spirit. Also most books of reminiscences are by far too long. Scarcely one-half is vital even in the best, and in many cases the proportion is much smaller. In autobiographies we are somewhat richer, and yet it would be difficult to name a dozen English autobiographies of the first rank.

Perhaps the very best of all is the autobiography of Gibbon ; and its life is largely due to its pleasantness, its tranquillity, its entire freedom from rancour, its innocence, and its homeliness.

*Mrs. Carlyle's Letters.*

THE peculiar attraction of Mrs. Carlyle's letters is that we have in them a gloomy tale, told with French vivacity. In this respect I cannot recall a parallel. We grow tired of reading about bad nights and castor-oil and insects, and disagreeable servants, and racking headaches, but still we read and read on. We shall not have read in vain if the volumes teach us the duty and the blessedness of thankfulness and charity. The whole spirit of Mrs. Carlyle is in the sentence to be found in Froude's publication, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof"—more than sufficient.

*Froude on Carlyle.*

IT was said by one of Froude's defenders at the time that, when all was said and done, no bones had been broken, and the Sage of Chelsea remained just as he was before. But, as a matter of fact, the bones of the Sage were broken.

*The Biographer Reflects.*

I HAVE a biography on hand, and it is natural that as I write it I should wistfully watch the work of more skilled artists. On applying to a well-known

literary man for advice, I was told I should take a book like Carlyle's *Life of Sterling* ! " I have not often smiled, since then, nor questioned much." But I have read carefully Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson's *Life of Fleeming Jenkin*, and while I have been depressed as a biographer, I have been rewarded as a man.

Is it not the duty of the biographer to be conventional ? I think so. For if he is not, his hero is compared with others who have been drawn in a different manner. Look at Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle, for instance, as depicted by the loving hand of Mr. Froude. Nobody knows what to make of them. Some say they were as happy as average married people ; some say the husband was a brute, and others speak disrespectfully of the wife. Have we the means of knowing ? If every famous couple kept all their letters, and wrote all the records of their quarrels, and their difficulties with servants and crowing cocks and relations and tradesmen, and if the whole bundle was bequeathed to a Mr. Froude, and if he published the whole in a large number of volumes, pleasantly relieved by dark and ominous hints of something worse beneath the surface—then we should have a standard of comparison, and know whether the Carlyles were or were not a happy couple. But biographers, whether because they love truth and their subjects less than Mr. Froude, or for some other reason, have not done so. Indeed their heroes have not often given them the chance. People have a happy knack of forgetting disputes. If they are foolish enough to write angry letters, they do not preserve sackfuls of



them for Froudes to print. Thus it comes that the seamy side is left out. Even when it is not, there are four seasons in every life, and it is good to think of the sunniest.

*Various Letters.*

THE general remark to be made on Ruskin's letters is that they are all characteristic. This is the sure mark of a man of genius, though some men of genius have lacked it. The briefest note written by John Ruskin is signed all over. It is with him as it is with Carlyle. Many of Matthew Arnold's letters, let us say, might have been written by anybody, but no one else could have written the letters of John Ruskin or of Carlyle. A very eminent politician and man of letters, who has had much to do with perpetuating the memory of Gladstone, said to a friend: "The fact is that all Carlyle's letters are worth publishing, and none of Mr. Gladstone's letters are worth publishing—I speak as an artist." It is to be noted also that there is no real repetition in Ruskin, or in Carlyle. They are not mere phrase-makers; their thoughts find a spontaneous and original expression.

*The Bright Detail.*

AFTER all, the only bits of biography that will survive are the Boswellic passages. All the rest goes—the letters, the philosophy, the criticism, the ponderous parts of life. A few characteristic incidents, a few saline sayings; these and these only

survive. About Oliver Goldsmith we remember the scarlet breeches, the plum-coloured waistcoat ; about Emily Brontë the heroic self-branding ; about Sydney Smith the wooden pavement of canons' heads round St. Paul's.

*Victorian Biography.*

I DO not know one great writer of the Victorian era whose biography has been fully and truthfully set forth.

*The Life of Lord Salisbury.*

IT is impossible to overpraise the work of Lady Gwendolen Cecil. She was, it is well known, the truest of daughters. Upon her the care of her great father devolved during the closing years of his life, and she never left him for a day. She had a profound knowledge of all he said and did, and was familiar with the motives of his political action, and with the steps he took from time to time to assert his views. Yet she is relentlessly impartial. She points out without hesitation the mistakes he fell into. She is more than anxious to do justice to both sides in the long controversy. In fact, there is a certain rigidity, if not harshness of judgment, shown, however, in a noble purpose, the purpose of writing true history. She is singularly non-committal, and by no means too eager to justify every action of her father's political life. This is because she knew him so well and loved him so dearly, and was so confident of his greatness that in her

## SILHOUETTES

*William de Morgan.*

I HAD very pleasant intercourse with him in connection with the reviews of the novel *Joseph Vance*, which I wrote in two periodicals.

The man himself was so slender and looked so frail that he appeared at first to be like a ghost among well-fed clubmen. But he soon showed himself to be a good trencherman, and evidently had the power of enjoying everything. But naturally the subject he liked best to talk about was his own fiction, defending himself against certain critics, but on the whole most grateful for the appreciation he received. He was a man of ideals and a most interesting and romantic writer.

*The Historian.*

HOW Gibbon reckoned up his enjoyments—his personal freedom, his intercourse with his friend, his spacious mansion, his high place among the numerous and companionable gentry of the neighbourhood, his regular habits of work. For four years he never moved ten miles from the place. But his was one of those natures that are self-sacrificing, that can stand without love, without faith, without the

hope of heaven, which can welcome human fellowship and yet demand no support from it.

*James Galloway Weir.*

I DO not believe there ever was or will be a member who gave his heart to his constituency as Mr. Weir gave his to Ross and Cromarty. Not even domestic sorrows—though no one felt these more acutely—were allowed to deflect or slacken his energies in this cause. It is with a sad pleasure that I remember how he used to knock at the door of my study and put in his head, with the invariable introduction, “Have you a minute?” On receiving an assent, he would come in, gruff and grim, red and earnest, generally with a small roll under his arm. This roll was a map of some part of his constituency, and he would spread it out on the table and go over the general geographical position. Then he would show what he was doing in order to secure additional post offices, harbours, and the like. In this way I learned, not very willingly, more about the geography of Ross-shire than most Londoners know. I have lost it, but I have not lost the impression of Mr. Weir.

*Lafcadio Hearn.*

HE was apt to comment as if he did not belong to the world of human beings on which he passed his judgment—as if he had come from another planet, and had the means of return ready.

## CHARACTERS OF LONG AGO

*Robert Chambers.*

I HAD the privilege of seeing a complete set of Robert Chambers's works, including some rare examples, and marvelled more than ever at the fertility, tenacity, and ardour of the mind which had covered so many subjects, that touched nothing which it did not adorn, that gave colour by its speculations, not only to those fighting the daily constant struggle of life, but to the highest among the romantics, and to the greatest men of science. Could *In Memoriam* have been written apart from Robert Chambers?

*Professor Blackie, the Fortunate.*

BLACKIE'S life was like a long walk by the Mediterranean shore.

*The Author of "Kilmeny."*

JAMES HOGG, the Ettrick Shepherd, in his own way the possessor of a genius as marvellous and as lonely as that of Scott himself. Indeed, one is sometimes disposed to think that no achievements in literature are more inexplicable than those of James Hogg. He was comparatively advanced in life before he could read and write easily. He never sat down to

commit a song to paper without first removing his coat and waistcoat, as if for some unusual exertion, while the rapid cramping of his wrist prevented his writing more than some four to six lines at a time. Things went against him, but he said, "I was generally more cheerful when most unfortunate."

*Mrs. Thrale.*

WHEN all is said and done, Mrs. Thrale would have been to us no more than Mrs. Montagu is, if it had not been for her connection with Dr. Johnson. Therein she was like many others. They crossed the illuminated track and there they blaze.

*John Timbs: ever Present.*

LONG ago John Timbs was editor of the *Illustrated London News*. Timbs had his peculiarities, and his employer, Mr. Ingram, was well aware of them. He would discuss them, but invariably the talk ended, "There is one thing about Timbs—he is always there." I have never known any man successful in work who was not always there.

*Canadian Settlers.*

MEMORANDA of a *Marine Officer* is one of the most delightful books ever written. Greatrex might have been one of the famous Victorian authors. He had enough humour and high spirits and invention to put him in the first rank, but somehow he missed the mark, and died in obscurity,

hidden away in a remote rectory. But to some he introduced Canada, and they can never forget his accounts of the serene beauty of Canadian nights, the green sapin beds in the forests, and prairie sports, the long luminous pillars of ice in winter, the little country congregations, which were considered satisfactory with an attendance of seventeen dogs, eight babies, and thirty settlers. Interspersed were many slight but gay, vivid, and masterly personal sketches.

*Johnson and Levett.*

I THINK the true Johnsonian will admit that the deepest affection for another man ever shown by Johnson was given to the poor apothecary, Robert Levett. There was no kind of intellectual equality between the men, and nobody could see what attracted Johnson to his poor friend. In fact people are often unable to explain friendships. But whatever the explanation, it is clear that Johnson set his heart upon him. He resolved with uncommon earnestness that whatever change might befall him he would never be separated from Dr. Levett.

## THE GENTLE READER

*What he dislikes.*

READERS as a rule shrink from what is sombre ; irony they simply detest. As a very eminent critic said to me the other day, irony in every form has become impossible to the writer who wishes to please the public. Either he is wholly misunderstood by his readers, or he is detested and abandoned.

*Making Notes.*

TO close a book, to think all over it, and then to put down in a journal what one remembers of it is in a very high degree profitable. It is not necessary in the case of those whose minds are roused by reading, but it is very necessary for those who want to think, and to be able to say something about a book beyond "How nice, How delightful, How tiresome," which is so very common, and so very distressful.

*What we bring.*

THE great books of the imagination are written in invisible ink, they are understood only by experience. You must be able to hold their pages before the fire of life ere their full significance appears to you ; it follows that one reading of a great book cannot suffice.



What do we bring to the reading of a book ? Do we bring to it the living and the understanding heart ? Many of the greatest books are rarely touched. The popular novelists of the day are widely read. Much of the best writing is invisible for lack of the flaming heart ; it is when we find our own experience, greatly expressed, that a book becomes our own.

*A Touchstone.*

CLEVERNESS, I am afraid, produces no impression on my mind at all. I have spent most of my life in constant communication with people much cleverer than myself. But for a well-read man I have a strong respect, and when his reading is really wide and deep, I venerate him. With what delight one listens to a sentence like this : "The three most adequate specimens of English style accomplishing its purpose perfectly are *The Merchant and the Friar*, *Waterland on the Athanasian Creed*, and Adams's *The Old Man's Home*." Try this as a touchstone on yourself and on anyone you meet, and see whether one person in a thousand could even tell you what the books are.